

# The Barnes Foundation

## Journal of the Art Department

---

### CONTENTS

Expression . . . . .	3
<i>by Violette de Mazia</i>	
Death and Creativity . . . . .	33
<i>by Henry F. Nardone, Ph.D.</i>	
Three Haiku for Autumn . . . . .	43
<i>by Patricia Neubauer</i>	
Art and Form in Two Poems . . . . .	44
<i>by Lucy Riley</i>	
Curriculum of the Art Department . . . . .	118
Publications Authored by Members of the Art Department Staff . . . . .	119
Illustrations:	
Library of the Art Department . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Plates 1 to 61 . . . . .	63-117

---

THE BARNES FOUNDATION PRESS

Merion Station, Pa. 19066

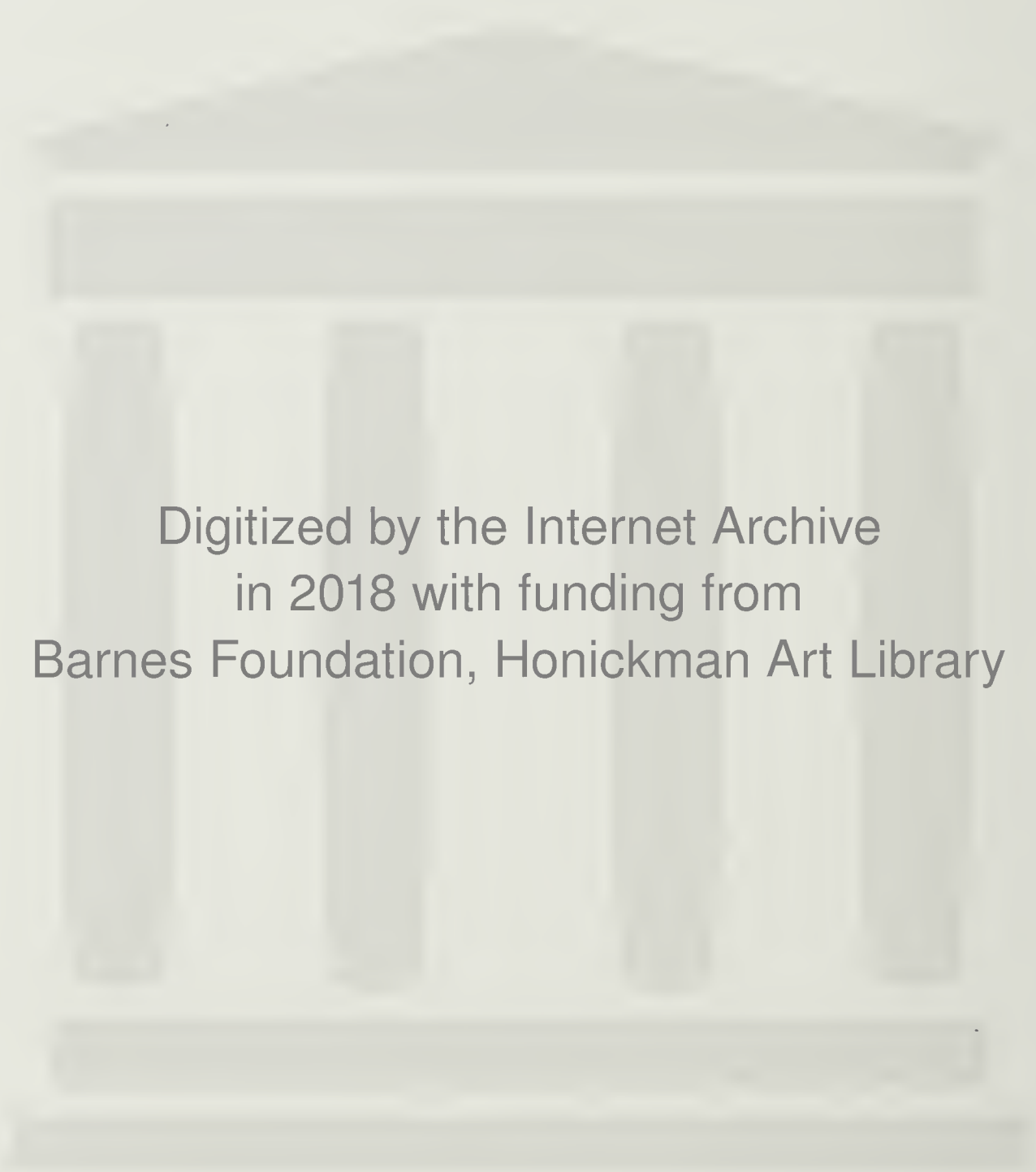
Copyright © 1974 The Barnes Foundation

Printed in the United States of America

## Errata

The editors of the JOURNAL wish to make the following correction of material appearing in Vol. V, No. 1 (Spring, 1974):

1. The credit line for *The Merry Company* (Plate 24) should include "Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913."
2. The credit line for *Young Girl with Turban* (Plate 29) should include "Photographer: A. Dingjan, The Hague." The copyright reference should properly be spelled "Stichting Johan Maurits van Nassau, The Hague."
3. The credit line for *Bridge under Rain* (Plate 35) should read "National Museum Vincent van Gogh—Amsterdam."



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2018 with funding from  
Barnes Foundation, Honickman Art Library

<https://archive.org/details/journalofartdepa52barn>



# THE BARNES FOUNDATION

Merion Station, Pa.

An Educational Institution Chartered December 4, 1922

---

## Journal of the Art Department

*Editor*—VIOLETTE DE MAZIA

*Associate Editor*—ELLEN HOMSEY

---

The essays, etc., appearing in the issues of this JOURNAL will, for the most part, be derived from the work of seminar students, alumni, and members of the staff of the Foundation Art Department. On occasion, articles and pieces will be published not directly concerned with the Foundation's philosophy but representing original work by the Art Department's students and outside contributors which the editorial staff considers to be of general interest to the JOURNAL's readers. Publication occurs twice a year.





Library of the Art Department



# JOURNAL *of* THE ART DEPARTMENT

---

VOL. V

Autumn, 1974

No. 2

---

## Expression\*

by VIOLETTE DE MAZIA†

IN previous essays we have gone to some lengths to demonstrate that the significance of a work of art lies in the aesthetic quality of the broad human values that it, as an object in its own right, expresses.‡ These values we have identified as the qualities of the things and situations of our environment to which human beings in general can respond—as, for example, qualities of delicacy, gentleness, power, aliveness, subtlety, drama. When our response has an inherent sense of satisfaction, these qualities are of an aesthetic nature, intellectually sensuous as well as sensuously gratifying—when, for instance, the qualities belong to an integrated ensemble of interest and appeal *per se*; when they are organically embodied in the structure of such an ensemble, are *of* it; when they are neither overstated, ostentatious, nor ill-defined, ambiguous; when they reveal imagination, originality; when they are purposely chosen and appropriately employed as means to fulfill the intent; when they are given in terms of qualities of the medium; when they are imbued with, carry a sense of conviction, and so forth. This

---

\* Part of the material of this essay was originally presented in class lectures.

† Director of Education.

‡ See: Violette de Mazia, "What to Look for in Art," *The Barnes Foundation Journal of the Art Department*, Vol. I, No. 2, (Autumn, 1970), The Barnes Foundation Press, Merion, Pa., pp. 3–22, and "Aesthetic Quality," *ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 1, (Spring, 1971), pp. 3–27.

response is not, of course, a mere matter of personal preference, but stems from the objective makeup of the thing perceived as it fulfills our basic psychological needs. We have further shown that, in the field of painting, these values are stated in visual terms, specifically, in the terms of the painter's medium—color and its derivatives, light, line, shape, volume, space.

Insofar as we understand the above, we understand in a general way what art expresses. Just, however, as one does not altogether know where he is if he cannot get there by more than one road, so to understand fully an idea or principle we must be able to approach it from many different points of view. In the present discussion of the notion of expression, we shall attempt an excursion along a new path. Our questions for this venture will be, "What is it in art that an artist expresses, what makes him express and, chiefly, what constitutes the process of expressing?" Let us take the first step by examining the basis of the meaning of experience.

We live in, we come in continuous physical, intellectual, emotional, psychological and imaginative contact with an environment of things, ideas, feelings, situations, people. And we are so constituted that there is an ongoing action between us and these ever-changing components of the outside world. They affect us and, as a result, create in us a perpetual need for adjustment and re-adjustment. We are, to give a simple illustration, in a bus, and the fur coat of the woman next to us touches our hand; it nettles us, and we move our hand away.

Furthermore, since the world was not made to man's specifications, there is a constant need for organizing what nature offers according to each individual's own point of interest. At some time in his life on earth, for instance, man got tired of standing or decided that squatting on the ground was uncomfortable or unhealthy; therefore, he chopped himself a block of wood or rock and made of it a seat, in that way achieving a sense of adjustment—*i.e.*, a more satisfactory relationship with his immediate surroundings. A chair we might use today offers similar possibilities of adjustment: we may be fatigued and seek out a chair on which to rest; we



can turn our back to it, fold our body and sink down onto the seat; after a while we may become uncomfortable and shift our body or even push the chair off and stand again.

Keeping alive in any situation, emotional, intellectual, psychological or physical, requires the continued ability to adjust to the effect of the environment on us. This capacity, indeed, is what distinguishes the "live creature" from inert matter. John Dewey, in his *Democracy and Education*, cites the example of the stone and the effect on it of its environment.\* The stone does nothing either to counter that effect or to retain its own identity: when it undergoes the effect of the weather, it becomes worn and stays worn, it splits and stays split. When, on the other hand, the weather affects us, living human beings, we make an adjustment to it; it causes us to feel cold and we adjust by putting on warm clothing. Again, when Renata Tebaldi or Marian Anderson sings, we adjust by listening; and when our neighbor's son bangs on the piano, or his daughter vocalizes, we adjust by closing the windows or our ears or by rapping on the neighbor's wall or door.

In a more philosophical vein, we might say that happiness is, in essence, a satisfying adjustment of body, mind and emotions to the surrounding circumstances. Aristotle put it succinctly when he remarked, "Happiness is the result of some activity"; that is, we *do* something in order to attain the happiness of feeling adjusted.

The above principle is as applicable to the person who functions as an artist as it is to the person who acts because of the coldness of the weather or the discomfort of standing. Thus, the artist Horace Pippin comes across the Friends Meetinghouse at Birmingham, near Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania (Plate 15); it acts on him, affects his interest and sensitivity from the point of view of the artist he is. And, as we perceive possibilities for a satisfying adjustment in a chair, for the sake of which we do something, so, too, does Pippin, according to his interests, perceive possibilities for a satisfying adjustment in the Meetinghouse, for the sake of which adjustment he does something (*cf.* Plate 15 and Fold-out

---

\* The Macmillan Company, (New York, 1916), p. 1.

Plate 16\*). We may brush away some dust, add a cushion, draw up a footstool, by all of which we establish new relationships between us and the chair; in other words, we remedy or remold the situation as we find it in order to satisfy the particular sense of adjustment we seek. Similarly does the artist Pippin, for the purpose of achieving an adjustment to his aesthetic interest, remold and remedy. He may shift his position with regard to the Meetinghouse (as Corot is reputed to have said, "In the painting of landscape, the most important thing is to know where to sit"); and he may make specific changes in the scene as he finds it—adding, eliminating, emphasizing colors, planes, the degree of contrast of the lights and darks. This remolding, remedying, occurs in both perception and execution, so that the person, the artist he is, can be aesthetically more at ease, better adjusted.

We may note, then, that adjustment always takes place according to the individual involved. A long-legged man will adjust to a chair differently from the way a short-legged man will. Likewise in Pippin's case, the transformation of the bit of environment he has encountered into a situation of color, light, etc.—*i.e.*, a picture situation—is one to which he, as he alone is constituted, can feel aesthetically adjusted.†

What, then, did Pippin actually do to accomplish that adjustment? First, as we anticipated, he selected a particular view as he painted the picture—specifically, seating himself so that the centrally located foreground tree with its spreading foliage would serve as a *repoussoir* element. He also imparted to the situation a stark drama by accentuating the white of the shutters, doors, posts and roof edges, which color avoids monotony in its recurrence because of the actively rhythmic variety of the shapes in which it is presented—wide, narrow, up, down, short, long. Pippin further emphasized this rhythm, making it the main

---

\* For the reader's convenience in following the analytical discussion, the reproductions of this picture, "Friends Meetinghouse at Birmingham, Pa.", and Cézanne's "Valley of the Arc (Mont Ste-Victoire Seen from Bellevue)" (Plate 59), studied later in this essay, appear on fold-outs that can be exposed while the text is being read.

† Ultimately, of course, the sense of aesthetic adjustment is shared by the sensitive and sympathetic viewer of that new picture situation which the artist reveals as he paints his canvas.



motif of the painting, by distorting the architecture of the building: what normally would be the left side of the house, with its gable, continues the plane made by the front and its rhythm of white shapes. Moreover, the intense whiteness of these units qualifies the character of the painting as a whole. As a color, and because of its dark immediate context, the white is stark and dramatic, and it gains still greater impact by being contained in clean-cut, precisely angular shapes that contrast with the graceful flow of the branches and foliage at the top and with the relatively inactive foreground below. The total result is not unlike a Negro spiritual sung by a chorus—an insistent tom-tom beat (the white doors, shutters, etc.) underscoring the lilt of the melody (the branches and foliage), with a solo voice (the patches of blue sky) soaring above, as it remains part of, the rest. To draw the comparison still more closely, we also find a parallel in the painting to the continuous, unifying character of the humming that typically permeates the spiritual—the repetitive small brush strokes in the foreground and the patterning of the stonework and of the individually drawn leaves, which, together with the effects already mentioned, served to unite the whole on the basis not only of pattern, but also of drama, tonality, space and a naïveté, *i.e.*, an unselfconscious, untaught, natural, kind of logic.

The artist's final sense of satisfying adjustment occurs when he succeeds in giving an objective body to the feelings aroused in him by a particular experience—a satisfaction comparable to that which attends the successful carrying out of an act of aggression, as we can see if we examine what takes place as either the artist or any one of us expresses meanings of whatever feelings we have: in both a successful act of aggression and a successful act of expression, we establish a relationship with an outside force, situation, person or object according to our feelings, a relationship in which we use that outside circumstance to bring about a sense of satisfaction in terms of those feelings.

In short, our feelings are not stored in pigeonholes, to be pulled out and shoved back at will. Genuinely felt feelings are always about or directed towards something and always result from interacting with our environment. You tread on

my toe; it hurts, although the pain may be qualified by my emotional feelings towards you. You go to sleep while I am talking; that, too, hurts. You listen to me; that pleases. I step on your toe, figuratively speaking, when I jostle your idols in art. And, as you are made aware of how I feel when you tread on my toe or when you sleep or listen, so can I judge the resentment or doubt or surprise on your part by what you do as a consequence of what you hear from me; you frown, shake your head, bite your lip—all of which, and more, you do because it is natural, provided you are not psychopathic or deceitful, to bring out, to want to externalize, in one way or another, what we feel inside of us.

The instinctive urge to show our feelings leads to two main results. One is that others know of those feelings. This is variously motivated. When, for example, a child calls "Mama, come look," he is conveying a desire for genuine sharing. When he calls "Mama, come see what I did," or cries only for sympathy when there is an audience, he wants to be approved of, praised or noticed. There is a touch of the latter type of child in the grown-up—indeed, grown-ups are only children who have lived a little longer or, as Ashley Montagu has it, "deteriorated babies"—who emotes in words, colors, tears or gestures to get attention, who, in other words, shows off rather than shows in order to reveal and communicate. The show-off wants praise; the sharer wants a participative response—an opinion, an appraisal.

The second consequence of bringing out the meaning of our feelings is that, when we do so, when we are able to find the appropriate words, colors, and so on, to give those feelings an objective body, we experience a release that procures relief. We attain a sense of adjustment that makes us feel better, even though we may be aware that what we bring out may meet with disapproval. The act of confession in the Catholic Church, the *mea culpa*, provides a happy sense of adjustment quite apart from what it may promise of our chance of salvation. In like fashion, the criminal confession, independently of other such benefits as receiving a lighter sentence, affords the confessor a feeling of relief, of being better adjusted, simply because he has "got it off his chest." Similarly, the state of friendship owes a lot of its comfort and satisfaction to the



fact that we can bare our soul, so to speak, to the friend. Indeed, when we are required to maintain silence, to keep our observations, our feelings to ourselves, we become uncomfortable, anxious to share any kind of communication; in a library or at the theatre, we must refrain from talking to our companion, and are we not at times frustrated and ill at ease because of that? Again, are we not subject to impulses to divulge a secret we have been entrusted with? Nor does the relative significance of the information have much to do with the strength of those impulses. And why is solitary confinement such an ordeal? For the same reason that in occupied France during the second world war the restriction on freedom of speech was as hard to bear as was the rationing of food. Only when feelings can be brought out can we achieve a measure of peace.

In sum, we need to bring out the meanings of our feelings, and to do so we use the means we are familiar with that are at our disposal and that we are capable of using. We witness a performance, and we clap, hiss or shout "bravo!" Or, it leaves us indifferent, and we indicate that feeling by abstaining from clapping or hissing. We are happy, and we smile, we dance for joy, we burst into laughter. We suffer, and we cry, we scream. You tread on my toe, and I say "Ouch," "Oh," "Ah" or utter not a word or sound, and my speechlessness bespeaks my feelings. All of these are examples of outward manifestations of feelings resulting from interaction with our environment.

When we give such outward show to our feelings, we do nothing different in kind from what an artist does when he paints his picture, carves his sculpture, writes his poem. His actions derive from the same instinctive urge. He, too, is hit, stepped on, nettled, affected by a happening in the outside world that in turn affects his sensitivities—in his case, to aesthetic aspects. Cézanne, for instance, is affected by the rising of a mountain, its jutting into the blue sky (Fold-out Plate 59), just as the rising of the stock market or a spaceship affects others.

Let us look at what leads to my "Oh" as you step on my toe. However automatic it may seem to be, it does not come about from that sort of mechanical process of my pressing

with my finger the key of the letter *O* of a typewriter. If everything is in order, we can predict an *O* on the paper every time, whether I, you, he, she presses that key today, tomorrow, on one or another machine. My "Oh" may appear to be like that: you step on my toe and, as if a button has been pushed, out comes the "Oh." But I may say "Ouch" or "*Oh-la-la*"—there is no way of predicting what a person will bring out when his toe is stepped upon; try stepping on different persons' toes and see. One may not emit a sound and may even smile, for he does not like you and does not want to make you happy; or you are his friend, and he does not want to make you unhappy. Another will let you know of his feelings by turning around and stepping right back on your toe.

The same experiment may be tried with a mountain landscape stepping on the aesthetic sensitivities of a variety of artists. In Matisse's "Two Girls on Hill" (Plate 10), the artist says "green area setting off the colors of the girls in their dresses." In Renoir's "Pourville" (Plate 11), the artist says "gentle, velvety mountain" and leads our eye to it gracefully and glidingly. In Gritchenko's "Mistra" (Plate 13), the artist says "planes sliding sideways among other planes." In Andrew Dasburg's "Mountain in the Southwest" (Plate 12), the artist says "floating, vaporous mass reminiscent of effects encountered in early Chinese painting." And, as we said, adjustment is always according to the individuality of the person affected. Bring Chardin to the mountain, and he will look around for some crock or copper utensil left over from a picnic (Plate 6) and ignore the mountain entirely. In all these cases, the impact is of the same or very similar thing, but, depending on the artist's individuality, sensitivity and interest, both in general and at the moment, one says "Oh," one says "Ah," and Chardin even says "Pooh-pooh."

It is to our purpose to determine what differentiates my "Oh" from the mechanical *O*, for from that shall we understand the distinction between genuine expression and expression which is artificial, made to order, manufactured, only a sham and not really deserving of the name expression—the "expression" of the painter who does things because of



an outside motivation, because it is expected of him or because it brings the prize and public praise—like the opinions “expressed” by people who wait to read the reviews of a concert or play before they venture “their” comment.

What, then, led to my “Oh”? Did you, by stepping on my toe, decide on my saying it? No more than did the mountain decide or determine what the artist whose sensitivity it stepped on would utter. Neither we nor the artist are like the key of the typewriter, which responds automatically to a finger pressed upon it. I am, to be sure, able to utter other sounds, even other tones of “Oh”; but now, because you stepped on my toe and because of the feelings I now have, I select *that* “Oh” out of all possible and available, *i.e.*, known-to-me, sounds, out of all possible and available tones of voice, just as, out of all possible and known-to-him colors and tones of color, the painter selects those that will embody his specific interest and feelings. I select, he selects, with whatever degree of consciousness,\* all that I, he, needs from the possibilities of tone, length of sound, pitch, modulation, shape of mouth, countenance, from the possibilities of color, light, shape, density, weight, space. Because of this, my “Oh,” by the characteristics I have imbued it with, embodies, conveys, my feelings as my toe, no one else’s, is now stepped upon by you; and the artist’s painting, by its characteristics, embodies, conveys, his feel-

---

\* The degree of consciousness or intellectual awareness varies with each individual. When we talk conversationally, although we may have a knowledge of the general direction our sentence will take, we are not consciously aware of having to plan each word and its placement—that is, once we have mastered the language. And, even in formal speech, the readiness with which the right phrase springs to his lips differs from person to person. Cézanne, to quite an extent, was aware of the reason for making each touch what it is. Renoir, on the other hand, painted as a bird sings. And Matisse, although appearing to be spontaneous, carefully engineered the effects he achieved. The reason that Matisse’s “second thoughts” are not obvious as such, while Cézanne’s retouches are, is that Cézanne, in his corrections, piled up the paint and Matisse scraped out or wiped off his misdirected strokes. In general, if the artist does not know intellectually the reasons for his doings, he knows them behavioristically, at the tips of his fingers that guide the brush—not unlike our pushing back a lock of hair from our forehead or tilting our hat at a certain angle: we do not reason the action out; we see, we feel, we know its rightness. It is analysis, *post facto*, that discovers, reveals and evaluates the what, how and wherefore.

ings as his aesthetic sensitivity, no one else's, is stepped upon by the mountain.

On other occasions, affected differently by the environment, I may again say "Oh." But now, using another tone, another modulation, I make the "Oh" convey admiration, surprise, disgust, doubt or indifference. In the same way can a painter use, for instance, the color green. Although he may have selected it for what it can say that, of course, red cannot—just as "Oh" can say something that "Pooh" cannot—like my "Oh," green itself can be used to stand for many different meanings. In Renoir's "Henriot Family" (Plate 26), the artist makes it say "green pervasiveness." In his "Anemones" (Plate 7), he makes it say "green focus" or "exclamation mark" by concentrating it on the vase. In his "Nude on Green Background" (Plate 3), he makes it say "green-setting-off-contrast with ivory figure."

In short, just green, just "Oh," just mountain, etc., have endless potentialities of meaning according to the use made of them, the particular purpose they serve. Purposive use means selection of specific characteristics for the sake of attaining a specific end, as when I use "Oh" to convey the meaning of my feelings when your foot impresses its weight upon my toe. I dismiss all other possibilities available, all other known-to-me sounds, tones and countenances. I select that "Oh" from all others. I press it out with its painful, angry tone. And, pressing out through purposive selection that painful-toned "Oh," I ex-press the meaning of the now-painful-to-me experience. Finally, because *I* selected according to *my* feelings, abilities, knowledge, it is *my* "Oh," and what it ex-presses, or brings out, is not the meaning of pain in general, but of *my* pain, here and now.

My "Oh" ex-presses the meaning of my pain only, however, provided it originated in feeling, was churned inside and propelled from within me, and is not a mere shamming, a formula-phrase uttered because it is expected of me by Uncle George or Emily Post or because I had used it on other such occasions or had heard others use it under similar circumstances. This kind of shamming is the case with the virtuoso who, as against the expressive performer, displays nothing but technical ability. Technique, to serve expres-



sion, must arise from feeling, which is born within; if the performer does not feel, he cannot ex-press. If, when the script says "raise your voice," the actor merely raises his voice, the performance is dead. When a painter paints a nose and is told that the time has come to put on the highlights, and on go the highlights, there is no genuine ex-pression. Nothing was born within him, and, although he may have skill of technique, that is all that his statement shows.

What we do, as we indicated earlier and illustrated with my "Oh," when we make everyday sorts of adjustments to the circumstances of our environment, corresponds to what an artist does when he paints—with, however, one difference: the artist seeks adjustment specifically with reference to his aesthetic sensitivity; that is, he seeks to give body to his experience in terms of qualities that are intrinsically satisfying to our intellectual and emotional needs. This he does by means of his specific use of what we have elsewhere called the universal attributes of the material with which he is concerned and their broad human significance for what they can contribute to that end.\* As we have noted above, the results that impel both us and the artist to expression are the same. (1) We feel better by being adjusted. (2) We communicate, share. Additionally, (3) in the process of selecting, of making an expression clear to others, we clarify the meaning of our feelings for ourselves. We are happy or sad and tell a friend about it; that telling helps us to focus on what it is that makes us feel that way and, thus, to be more intelligently happy, to cope more effectively with our sorrow. This, incidentally, is why one learns so much when he teaches.

From what we have seen so far, it goes without saying that the success and character of our expression depends not only on the genuineness of our feelings, but also on our ability to choose the material that will function as our medium. We

---

\* To recapitulate briefly, universal attributes for the painter are color, light, line, space, location, etc., *i.e.*, those features of things which constitute their visual actuality. They have broad human significance insofar as they are made to convey qualities meaningful to anyone, anywhere, at any time—not, for example, as they convey "house," but as they convey stability, sense of conviction, weight, power, delicacy, subtlety, rhythm, unity and variety, and so forth. When they lead us to respond to their occurrence with an inherent sense of satisfaction, they are aesthetic in nature.

might look, with this in mind, at a poem by Thomas Carew, a seventeenth-century English poet.

RED AND WHITE ROSES

Read in these roses the sad story  
 of my hard fate and your own glory;  
 In the white you may discover  
 the paleness of a fainting lover;  
 In the red, the flames still feeding  
 on my heart with fresh wounds bleeding.  
 The white will tell you how I languish,  
 and the red express my anguish:  
 The white my innocence displaying,  
 the red my martyrdom betraying.  
 The frowns that on your brow resided  
 have those roses thus divided;  
 O, let your smiles but clear the weather,  
 and then they both shall grow together.

What the poet really says is "You spurned me, but I still love you," but, because of his particular, personal, ability to select his expressive material, with what a wealth of subtle shades of meaning!

Expression, then, is a kind of distortion, a departure from subject facts, since it is selection for a purpose and it is individual. Moreover, as we are now ready to see, *fully*,\* significant expression embodies elements taken from both ends of an experience. My "Oh," even if you actually stepped on my toe, was selected only from within, according to my own feelings. And, while feelings are present at the birth of experience and expression, that is not all there is to the question. The feelings present at its birth may affect the general direction an expression will take, but, if they alone determine that expression, it fails to be objective and specific, *i.e.*, fully significant. Note the difference between my exclamation "Oh" and the more objective and explicit "Oh, you villain, with your

---

\* We might remark that such emotional outbursts as we used in our illustration—"Oh," "Ouch," or, for that matter, a painter's extravagantly slapped-on color splotches and smears—are not devoid of meaning. Actually, they signal distress or elation of some sort, the object and nature of which, however, remains for the outsider uncertain, nonspecific, unknown, *i.e.*, not *fully* significant.



horribly heavy heel, and no provocation on my part, you stepped on my toe, and it hurts like the dickens!" In the second instance, I re-created, in characteristics of the words I used, not what you did—that would be mere reporting—not what I feel—that would be mere emoting—but a new situation that was born of *both* your action and my feelings. That is, I selected factors from both participants in the experience, and, further, I selected relevant factors—not irrelevant ones, such as "the heel of your brown shoe, size twelve, that you bought last Friday for six dollars in Wanamaker's basement."

There are, as we intimated above, many human performances not genuinely expressive that are yet mistaken for or illegitimately passed off as expression. These include, first, the literal report or re-production, in which the factors are drawn from the outside situation alone, such as Repin's "The Cossacks" (Plate 28) and the general work of such painters as Meissonier and Norman Rockwell—truly, except for the intervention of technical prowess, nothing but a version of the *objet trouvé*; and, second, the explosive outburst, the emotional eruption, the boiling over of the overheated pot, in which the factors are drawn almost solely from within, such as de Kooning's "February" (Plate 2).<sup>\*</sup> In this latter category we might also place an unorganized painting by Soutine and van Gogh and many a canvas by their emulators. Such paintings are, as it were, uncontrolled bursts into tears, or into color; the source for them is overpoweringly from the painter's own emotions, and, although he may be honestly representing his feelings, the work is still no more than an explosive outpouring by way of paint, a figurative throwing of one's hat in the air or a hurling of a vase upon the floor.

Ironically, this type of painting is referred to as "expressionism," "abstract" or not, and is revered by many as a sort of sacred product of "self-expression." In fact, however, it is most often simply a sloppy display of emotion, free-floating, undisciplined, incoherent. It would be more fittingly

---

<sup>\*</sup> I read recently that de Kooning paints at a very slow pace and carefully figures out every touch he puts on canvas. Should that be a fact, we might then consider his work to be the result of premeditated rather than spontaneous emoting.

labeled "a gush of temper" or "emotionalism" or "sentimentalism," with particular reference to George Santayana's description of the sentimentalist or the emotionalist as a person whose physiological makeup involves more poignant emotion than his mind can absorb or cope with. A gush of temper, a pouring forth of emotions, however real the feeling that prompted it, nonetheless falls short of being fully significant expression, for it lacks the meaning of the experience as a whole. As John Dewey puts it:

A gush of tears may bring relief, a spasm of destruction may give outlet to inward rage. But where there is no administration of objective conditions, no shaping of materials in the interest of embodying the excitement, there is no expression. What is sometimes called an act of self-expression might better be termed one of self-exposure; it discloses character—or lack of character—to others. In itself, it is only a spewing forth.\*

Again, "It takes the wine press as well as grapes to ex-press juice, and it takes environing and resisting objects as well as internal emotion and impulsion to constitute an *expression* of emotion."†

Before we apply the above findings to one particular painting, we shall review the main points thus far made about the process of expressing. First, expression is a selective process, a selective pressing out of material for the sake of giving significance or body to the meanings derived as a result of a genuine experience, *i.e.*, one in which both the individual we are and the outside situation interacted. Second, honest, genuine expression is, therefore, personal; it does not conform to a formula, a rule, routine or convention. Third, expression communicates. Fourth, expression procures a sense of adjustment—*aesthetic adjustment* in the case of the artist. Fifth, expression helps to make things clearer to the person from whom it derives—a point, incidentally, made use of in Freudian therapy. And, sixth, in fully significant expression or objectification of meanings, the selective process is directed towards both ends of, or both interacting

---

\* *Art as Experience*, Minton, Balch and Company, (New York, 1934), p. 62.

† *Ibid.*, p. 64.



participants in, the experience. Recall my expressive “Oh, you villain, with your horribly heavy heel, . . . you stepped on my toe . . . !” as against my emotive exclamation “Oh.” The expression is neither just what you did, as Repin, Meissonier or Rockwell would give us, nor is it just a display of the emotions I feel, as the “Abstract Expressionists” would give. Rather, the expression re-creates the new situation that comes into being, that was born, as your heel stepped on my toe and I responded. To all this, let us add one final observation that is implicit in the preceding summary—*viz.*, that expression is an ever-evolving or developing process, and, in the successful work of an artist-painter, it is the last dab of pigment on canvas or paper that terminates as it completes it.

Let us examine the process of expressing, as we now understand it, in relation to an aesthetic experience, using for our example Cézanne’s “Valley of the Arc (Mont Ste-Victoire Seen from Bellevue)”\* (Fold-out Plate 59). As when you stepped on my toe and I said a few things, so, when the valley and the mountain stepped on Cézanne’s aesthetic toe or sensitivity he responded with a specific statement—his picture.

The world, as we said earlier, was not built according to our specifications, and a constant effort to re-adjust is required of us for physical and psychological survival. Likewise in Cézanne’s encounter with the mountain and valley: his sensitivity and creative drive were affected, leading to a need for achieving the relief of release. Perhaps, as with Pippin when he encountered the Meetinghouse, Cézanne’s first adjustment was physical, a shift of position to discover what exactly it was that moved him, until, possibly after several tries, he found the view that we see in this painting.

The picture, we know, is the objective embodiment of meanings and feelings that were born of Cézanne’s experience—specifically, the embodiment of factors and characteristics selected by him, pressed out for his purpose from himself and from the outside situation which was in part responsible for that experience. From the outside situation he pressed

---

\* Referred to, hereafter, as “Valley of the Arc.”

out certain subject facts that permit recognition—the silhouette of the mountain, the architecture of the houses, the viaduct, the cypresses and not the olive trees, which also grow there—as we could see if we were to visit the site.

Furthermore, Cézanne selected neither all the facts nor merely the facts. There is no expression in that. Remember my “your horribly heavy heel” as against “your shoe bought for six dollars at Wanamaker’s.” In the first instance, the selection is from me as well as from the outside: “horribly heavy” does not belong to your shoe for everyone always, or even for me at all times; if you were to flirt with me under the table, it might be a “nice” shoe. Similarly, material pressed out from the outside situation of valley and mountain acquires for Cézanne, at this time, characteristics that do not necessarily belong to that situation as it is or do not belong to it for him at all times or for everyone. We do not find them in a photograph of the view (Plate 58), and we do not find them in, for instance, Renoir’s or Winston Churchill’s or Marsden Hartley’s paintings of the same landscape (Plates 57, 18, 50, 51 and 52). In the Cézanne, there is a quality of power, a massive weightiness, a sense of the expanse of the valley and of the towering of the mass of the mountain over that expanse, all of which comes from the outside situation, that landscape, and from him, Cézanne, now stepped upon by it. Accordingly, they belong to the new situation born of Cézanne’s experience at the time of this painting.\*

---

\* We should observe that the same artist’s—Cézanne’s—experience of this mountain and valley on other occasions resulted each time in the expression of quite different characteristics. His interest on each occasion varied; hence his experience and perception changed; hence also did his expression. At the risk of belaboring the point, and perhaps having the tail wag the dog, we shall examine at some length a number of pictures in which the starting point was the same locale as that in “Valley of the Arc,” limiting ourselves, for the most part, to a consideration of their salient compositional features.

In “Mont Ste-Victoire from Bibémus Quarry” (Plate 30), instead of drawing out the expanse of the landscape as a predominating compositional effect, Cézanne now expresses an upward movement qualified by a sense of compactness and compression. Here, the background does not reach backward into space, but rises immediately behind and atop the foreground, thus bringing the volume of the mountain forward, while the vertical trees and the rocks of the quarry, like pilings holding up a superstructure, consolidate the whole practically into one single, upright mass.

In “Mont Ste-Victoire” shown on Plate 29, there is likewise an apparent



The towering power in "Valley of the Arc" suggests a figure from Michelangelo's "Last Judgement" (Plate 5) by the latter's towering of the upper over the lower part of the body; but, whereas in Michelangelo the towering bulk of the figure's upper part projects forward, in the Cézanne the towering massive mountain retains a position far back in the distance. In Cézanne, moreover, and not in Michelangelo, color builds up the internal structure, and in this expression of structural color, Cézanne selects, ex-presses, something from the Venetian tradition of painting (see, for example, Tintoretto's "Christ and the Woman of Samaria," Plate 20). From Tintoretto and the Venetians in general, Cézanne also draws, ex-presses, a sense of bigness, a regal monumentality that arises from his establishing between the color volumes and space a particular relationship that creates powerful beats.

---

physical continuity between foreground and background, but, in this instance, the road, trees, etc., in the foreground initiate a rolling rhythm that recedes as it ascends towards the mountain and is continued by the foothills. This uninterrupted rhythm, as well as the way it is handled, yields the effect as if the large foreground units were themselves foothills—as if, that is, the mass of the Ste-Victoire started in the foreground and rested upon it along the entire width of the canvas. The whirling units of this foreground area and of the mountain peak, which reaches to the top of the canvas, contribute also a three-dimensional fulness and a continuous surge from bottom to top, while the entire landscape fills the niche provided, so to speak, by the boundaries of the canvas, helping in the ex-pression of a sense of bigness and massive bulk that the picture as a whole conveys.

A pencil drawing, reproduced on Plate 31, usually dated 1905, closely approximates the view presented in "Valley of the Arc," indeed, so much so that it could be taken for a preparatory drawing for the painting except for the fact that it was supposedly done years later than the oil, which dates from 1888. This drawing, although a forceful shorthand notation, is delicately treated; the line firmly defines contour, and a few judiciously placed dark accents, gently crisp and positive, outline, as it were, the path our eye is to take as it moves backward and upward from front to back.

The two watercolors entitled "Mont Ste-Victoire," illustrated on Plates 33 and 34, also encompass the same perspective of the mountain and valley as does "Valley of the Arc." Both exhibit distinctive deftness in the handling of the medium, as well as a delicacy of touch and a translucency of color. In the one on Plate 34, however, the mountain, a unit that consummates the massive buildup of the foothills, for all its gentle relationships of color, light and dark, still suggests a firm, compact density and is expressive of strength, power, majesty, weight, bigness and a remarkable degree of completeness; while in the other, depicted on Plate 33, our attention is anchored on the foreground and middle distance, where our eye would tend to remain were it not

Cézanne ex-presses the bigness and structural color of the Venetians in the real sense of selecting both from them and from himself. He left out their warmth, their mellowness, their fluidity and drew from himself a sense of simplicity, a fixity, a directness, a relative coolness, an austere, majestic grandeur, even a clean-cutness of shapes set in relatively clear space—this last ex-pressed possibly from his feelings about and knowledge of clear, cold days or, perhaps, from the Florentine painters (*e.g.*, Plate 4) or such early Venetians as Mantegna (*e.g.*, Plate 22).

---

for the sequence of color punctuations and delineating elements that direct it to the mountain. Divergent as these two expressions are, both are outstanding for the fulness of their statements, attained in each with a minimum of means. On the verso of the watercolor of Plate 34, a drawing, a rough sketch (Plate 32)—again of the same site and from the same angle—indicates, as does the drawing on Plate 31, what on that particular occasion became in Cézanne's experience the articulating key points, portrayed as visual "clicks," which decide, dictate the path and tempo of the rhythmic recession.

In "Mont Ste-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves," a pencil drawing washed with watercolor, pictured on Plate 37, the mountain, now presented from a different angle, rises up rather abruptly from a would-be line of horizon; the broad horizontal band wherein the mountain is set is one of three such bands, more or less parallel, that constitute the framework of the total organization. An angularity and a patchiness of fluttering color touches or dabs, executed in swiftly noted-down, spontaneous strokes, serve as unifying elements as they are carried throughout valley, mountain and sky. The wide band at the bottom extending a third of the way up the canvas seems to take a dip by way of the tree at its center, and the V-shape of this downward dip, in its opposing the pyramidal structure of the mountain, helps to ground the rising mass. The resulting two rounded, hassocklike units—the rest of the foreground band on each side of the dip—work to hold up the land and mountain and to hold them in, at the same time that they form a gently undulating parapet, over and beyond which the vast open vista extends. As with the double meaning of words in a pun, these "hassock" units can also be perceived as parts of the receding plain behind the trees in the immediate foreground. Unlike a pun, however, in which a word may be interpreted in more than one way for an enrichment or expansion of significance, here the slight ambiguity between the units' rôle of upright parapet and that of flattened area of land gives rise to a confusion that diminishes the directness of the statement.

The above watercolor invites comparison with the watercolor of the same subject reproduced on Plate 38, in both of which pictures the identical view of the landscape was experienced by the artist. Despite this similarity of outside situation, however, each work is a distinctive plastic entity—a communication, in a sense, of two dissimilar opinions about the scene that reflect the artist's varying interest in and sensitivity and selective reaction to it as he beholds it in the light of different circumstances of time, feeling, experience, etc. Of the two, the latter (Plate 38) is the stronger from the point of view of decisiveness



In order to understand an artist's, or anyone's, use of traditions, we should bear in mind that, although we feel at times quite isolated from each other—one of the tragic conditions of life—yet, as John Donne put it, “No man is an island”; we do, in fact, need each other—not only in the sense of needing the baker to bake our bread, but also for the purpose of our development and growth as we learn from each other. Thus did Cézanne need Michelangelo, the Venetians and the Florentines. At the same time, however, we should also remember that whatever man inherits he must earn before he can morally claim it as his—as Cézanne in “Valley of the Arc” makes what he ex-presses from the Venetian and Florentine traditions his own by modifying those borrowings according to his particular responses to the world. He changes them, for example, by presenting them in a format of an orderly, relatively frontal sequence of more or less parallel landing stages that function as landmarks in the recession (see his concise expression of these essentials in drawings of this same subject, Plates 31 and 32)—an idea he ex-presses from his knowledge of the work of the seventeenth-century French artist Poussin (*e.g.*, Plate 21), whom he greatly admired.

---

of expression; here there is no wavering of intent and no playing with illusory effects. The pattern of the tonal accentuations throughout plain and mountain is of sharply-defined beats that step up through the space recession. Fore-ground and valley line up with each other unambiguously on a continuous plane and together organize in a pattern that mirrors the upright bony structure of the mountain in an assertive, unequivocal, confident and assured manner for a firmly established sense of up-and-down equilibrium.

The mountain in “Mont Ste-Victoire” shown on Plate 39, a watercolor with pencil, seems to be tucked behind the foothills and to be separated from or added onto, rather than merged with, the rest of the landscape. In this respect, it bears a relationship to its base similar to that of the innermost conical tuft of leaves in a boiled artichoke: the inner tuft can easily be picked up, all in one piece, neatly lifted off from the base, without leaving any mark or imprint indicative of its having been there.

Again, different occasions, different experiences result in different expressive uses of the subject. The quasi-monochromatic grey-blue watercolor rendering of “Peak of Mont Ste-Victoire” (Plate 36) shows the peak jutting inescapably from behind the sweeping arcs of two large overlapping foothills; here it is an expression of massiveness specified by a particular combination of lateral and upward movements of volumes as the rise of the mountain to the upper right is slowed down by the sideways expansion of the foothills. This effect is further emphasized by the fact that the mountain practically fills the picture area. All-important long planes of delicately tinted colors pattern the sky at

Cézanne further makes his borrowings his own by giving the picture as a whole a nearbyness—a characteristic expressed from the Dutch tradition (*e.g.*, Plate 24), especially by way of artists nearer to him in time, such as Corot (*e.g.*, Plate 25), Courbet (*e.g.*, Plate 8) and Jules Dupré (*e.g.*, Plate 27), the last of whom he painted with. But, again, Cézanne transforms this characteristic of the Dutch tradition, intensifying the color scheme of his predecessors by flooding the canvas with light and incorporating warm

---

the upper left in a compact, receding sequence and slant counter to the direction of the mountain. We might here reinforce our point by taking advantage of the fact that these bands of delicate colors fail to register in the reproduction as either tones or shapes, and that, on account of this failure, the composition appears to be overweighted on the right and to hold our eye unduly on the mass of the mountain and its upward push. In the original watercolor, the bands of color at the upper left, for all their delicacy, are assertive enough in their hue and direction to pull the thrust of the peak in and thus to sustain adequate pictorial equilibrium in the compositional activity of the main units, without, however, detracting from the powerful drama of the peak's rising and reaching to the upper right. These color bands, together with tonal punctuations strategically disposed within the area of the mountain, enliven the otherwise unrelieved grey-blue of the painting—altogether, a convincing, affirmative statement expressed in pervasively delicate terms (*cf.* the photograph of the site on Plate 35.) And in the watercolor “‘Château Noir’ and Mont Ste-Victoire” illustrated on Plate 40, a more colorful version of the subject, the expression is of delicacy and of rhythmic, step-up beats of variegated, translucent, gentle color planes that slice up the space from foreground to distance. In “Bathers at Rest” (Plate 49), the mountain is made a massive pivotal block around which other volumes—figures and clouds—are set. Among other qualities presented in this work, those of nearbyness and of gigantic monumentality are perhaps uppermost.

Further, and in contradistinction to the above instances, Cézanne was obviously satisfied at other times to have the mountain play a minor part. In “The Viaduct” (Plate 9), for example, it becomes a subsidiary background area to help set off what is of primary interest here—the tall foreground trees. “Mont Ste-Victoire” shown on Plate 42 offers another such variation upon the Ste-Victoire theme; here the spaciousness of the valley is expressed from the outside stimulus, while the main masses of mountain and trees are shoved off to the left without being fully compensated for at the right, and a single tree, boldly set in the middle foreground, serves, if rather obviously, to push back the rest of the landscape. As a whole, this painting reads as an experiment in composition, rather than as an expression of a well-rounded experience and response. From the point of view of organization, despite the reliance on the darkened foreground foliage and foothill at the right to offset the weight and multiplicity of units on the left, it remains open-ended on one side, lacking a sufficient degree of balance and coherence; in this regard, one might say that it is *that* kind of expression—not compact, not tersely stated, with its composi-



tones among the blues and greens. Nor are the units in the distance greyed, as they are in the Dutch, but are of a positive color. They are clean-cut in shape and, due in part to the interspersions of the warm colors among the cool, seem to be at one and the same time both far away and nearby, thus adding to the towering power of the upper part of the painting. From Courbet and Corot, too, Cézanne expresses a sense of local color—for instance, the greenness of the green—although in the higher key of the Impressionists. From what he knows of the work of Pissarro, among the Impres-

---

sional significance left somewhat hanging, *i.e.*, unconcluded, hence inconclusive, open to conjecture, as when a friend leaves us with an "I'll see you later."

In contrast to the above, "Mont Ste-Victoire and Road" (Plate 17), in which the mountain also is given a relatively secondary position, makes a statement of balanced drama—specifically, a balance of directions as the mountain pulls to the left against the pull of the road to the right. This drama is further consolidated by the all-encompassing diamond formation, with its four apices anchored, respectively, in the mountain, the unpainted canvas area that says "cloud" at the top, the far end of the road at the right and the start of the road in the foreground center. In "The Trench" (Plate 43), the plane of a distant central peak concludes the recession of the foreground series of planes, which slide laterally into the picture in back of each other, not unlike the fitting together of the blades of a camera shutter.

Another instance wherein Cézanne assigns a subsidiary position to the Ste-Victoire is the watercolor "The Plaster Oven" (Plate 41), sometimes referred to as "The Mill." Here, the mountain—its mass barely adumbrated, its outline relatively ill-defined—along with the tall vertical chimney in the foreground, involves the horizontal group of buildings and trees in a stable, self-contained, rising pyramidal formation. The attempt is, however, obvious in intent and inadequate in execution. Although, for example, the foreground constituents play a rôle in a subtle compositional pattern and attain their own delicately dynamic space organization, the *raison d'être*, the logic, for each to be what it is and where it is in the picture context is altogether lacking. Indeed, the mountain itself, devoid of substance, seems to have come into being as an afterthought, to have been painted into the canvas merely "because it was there"—an unsolicited and pointless bonus. Again, then, we may say that this picture is *that* kind of expression—a slightly contradictory, two-part proposition, of which each part fails adequately to reinforce the other or to pull with it towards a common, organically conceived goal. Moreover, viewed in its totality, the picture makeup is only meagerly and shallowly realized, primarily on account of the intrusive shape of the mountain; the composite statement is relatively unconvincing, aesthetically inexplicit and awkward. Thus, in spite of such points of interest as the simplicity and clarity of execution, the subtle tension between the peak slightly decentered towards the right and the foreground units moving up to the edge of the canvas at the left, the rhythmic space composition in the foreground and the delicacy inherent in Cézanne's use of the medium, the total expression, particularly concerning the presence of the mountain, is rather

sionists, but also from the landscape itself, he expresses a color scheme of warm and cool hues—terra-cotta and emerald green—yet with less mellowness than in Pissarro and less shimmer than one sees in impressionist painting and with more emphasis on areas, patches and planes. These modifications are expressed from the landscape as it was—the shapes of fields, for example—and from Cézanne because of his having interests and feelings and knowledge that opened his eyes to characteristics of painters in the French tradition, such as the stressing of planes in the work of French primitives (*e.g.*, Plate 1) and of Poussin (*e.g.*, Plate 21). In Cézanne the planes become constituents of volumes that recall Manet's similar manner of doing (Plate 19), which themselves are set bluntly, as hacked-out blocks each in its

---

precarious—perhaps the outcome of an experience that was not too exciting in its entirety to the artist or not sufficiently focalized.

A very similar view of the landscape was selected on both the occasion of "Mont Ste-Victoire" illustrated on Plate 45 and that of "Mont Ste-Victoire" on Plate 46. Each of these paintings is a highly patterned composition, continuously activated by small, dramatically contrasted, jagged areas of dark and light color—as if of a series of eruptions of small color blocks not entirely under control. Ruggedness is expressed both in the delineating of the mountain's silhouette and in the valley as contained in the near foreground by dark, quasi-*repoussoir* bushes and buildings. In the first (Plate 45), however, the large block of the mountain looms up more forcefully towards the top of the canvas and dominates the landscape to a greater degree than does the Ste-Victoire in the other version; it seems to emerge from its immediate surroundings and to tower over them. In the second painting (Plate 46), the Ste-Victoire is of lesser proportions, more one with the rest of the landscape, but its relatively diminished size is to some extent compensated for by the more marked drama in the adjustment of its own carved-out facets or planes and by the rhythmic light-dark punctuations established above it in the clouds. These clouds hover over the vast expanse of the valley, counterbalancing at the top the dramatic ins and outs of the bushes at the bottom and, together with them, hold and sandwich in, contain, the entire scene. Then, too, in the first (Plate 45), our eye is led easily into the space beyond the mass of the mountain; in the other (Plate 46), while it eventually reaches the distant background spaciousness, our eye is made to linger within the confines of the landscape proper; it is held, detained by the pronounced rhythmic activity of the clouds, which echo in their patterning brush work the various similarly dramatic, patterning accents dispersed throughout the rest of the canvas, altogether making for a fairly compact presentation.

Two more interpretations by Cézanne of the same valley and mountain, reproduced, respectively, on Plates 47 and 48, that on a cursory look appear to be much alike further help to sustain our point: the same or very similar objective stimulus, the same artist, and a different expression each time. In



own space—a feature Cézanne expresses from rocks or, perhaps, architecture, about which he had feelings—and all is said with a directness, with no fuss or frills.

Also qualifying the whole canvas is a pervasive, immovable, four-square stability, partly derived from the all-inclusive pyramidal formation, as the mountain squats over the landscape, that gives the scene an architectonic monumentality. Yet, although each unit is rooted, as it were, to resist dislodge-

both of these paintings, the tree trunk at the left, a strong *repoussoir*, sets off the recession of the entire landscape; in both, also, the decorative aspect is stressed—by the pattern of the patches and planes that make up the land and mountain and by the more or less unexpected arabesque of foliage that spreads across the area of the sky and accentuates the undulating top outline of the mountain range. In “Mont Ste-Victoire” (Plate 47), however, land, sky and foliage practically line up with each other in a vast plane that recedes from bottom to top and offers an all-inclusive, continuous decorative surface akin to that of an oriental rug. In “Mont Ste-Victoire with Valley and Viaduct” (Plate 48), on the other hand, emphasis is given to the foliage overhanging in space, to its weight, its forceful undulation and the dark tone of its color—all acting somewhat as a canopy and as a further *repoussoir* to the landscape below.

Confronting an altogether different view of the mountain—this time, from Gardanne (Plate 44)—Cézanne chose to make of its pattern of dark and light—its recesses and protuberances—a row of pulsating ins and outs that echoes in the distance the more positive and complex rhythm of the planes making up the compact cluster of buildings in the foreground. The rhythmic mass of the mountain pulls to the right; by its relationship to this mass, the rhythm of the houses gives the semblance of pulling to the left.

It is, of course, a fact that comparisons similar to the above could be extended to include still other paintings by Cézanne. Likewise can the point made by noting the salient features of the Cézanne paintings be equally well made with, for instance, three paintings of the Mont Ste-Victoire by Marsden Hartley (Plates 50, 51 and 52), the expressions of which might be set up against either that of Cézanne (as we shall do later in the text proper with a painting by Renoir) or that of each other. The case will, of course, be the same with the work of any artist and for any subject: never the same experience; therefore, never the same expression.

In the preceding notes on expressions of various experiences of the Ste-Victoire landscape, we perforce essentially confined the observations to expression of feelings and meanings attained by placement, treatment and compositional relationships of masses. Notwithstanding the fact that the artist's selection and handling of color may, indeed do, exert a substantial, strongly qualifying influence on the full significance of these relationships, we excluded, but for passing allusions, consideration of it because, for all the progress made in color photography and printing, color reproductions still do much less justice to the originals than do illustrations in black and white.

ment, the organization is such that the expression embodies a self-generated, dynamic, rhythmic movement, which arises from the relationships between the "what," the "where" and the "how" of the composition. For, while we get all of the painting simultaneously as one effect, we are nonetheless led to explore it along a certain path. Beginning at the bottom, we are drawn up, backward, through and, inevitably, inexorably, to the impact of the peak. And, whatever the peak is, in terms of its impact, results from the cumulative effect of all the pulsating beats and powerful rhythms of this passage.

In fact, the peak starts in the very foreground to be what it is and to say what it says. It starts with a color rumbling, so to speak, in the first few rows or planes of foliage. These move up and down in a gently rounded, yet insistent, undulation along the width of the canvas and initiate a rhythmic receding sequence of the subsequent masses of foliage. The foreground activity is a substantial element in the drama of the scene as a whole, to be compared rather with the first act in a play than with the mere rising of the curtain; it more than sets the stage; it sets the pace. Again, this foreground "rumbling" is like an introductory chapter of a book or like a sad look on my face or a twinkle in my eye that prepares you for an unhappy or a cheerful tale I wish to tell. The foreground masses move across and up and down and, then, back towards a peak at the left of the houses, increasing in the angularity of their components and in their definiteness. The layers of planes recede back from each other in close formation and, gathering momentum as they travel on, pile up to a crescendo in the episodes of plane after plane after plane, reaching a climax in the apex of their own pyramid.

Then we come to a pause, the valley. This is not just any sort of pause, nor is it of just any length. In telling you my tale, I, too, after completing the first part of the narrative, take a deep breath and let the events already presented sink in; but I do not allow you to forget them, I do not switch to another story, and I pause only long enough to accomplish my purpose without losing the needed connection between the pieces of my narrative. Correspondingly in the Cézanne, the



pause is ex-pressed for a specific purpose. If we try to reduce or expand it, the foreground either loses its pyramid character or becomes confused with the pyramid of the mountain.

In itself, the middle-ground valley is flat, and it diverts, as it abruptly interrupts, the upward direction of the foreground pyramid. At the same time, it contrasts sharply with the upright mountain above it. By its shape, the valley, or pause, encloses and stresses the foreground pyramid, as its own spaciousness is, in turn, contained and stressed by being sandwiched between the two pyramidal walls—the foreground trees and the distant mountain. Still, the pause is not isolated from the rest; it is not just an empty breathing space, but an area with its own content of layers, thumps, steps and pulls, so that, while it is a pause, a change, it does not drop the main thread or idea. Instead, it expresses characteristics akin to those of the foreground and distance. There is a drama in its flat patches of light and dark that corresponds to the drama stated by the planes of the houses in the foreground and by the planes in the mountain beyond.\*

The pause serves also to introduce us to the next sequence of units in our progress through the recession—the volumes of foothills, which resume the undulating “rumble” that moves across the foreground. In the foothills, however, the units are larger and weightier than their foreground counterparts, and they roll, rather than undulate, as they carry the picture movement across, backward and upward and build up the body of the mountain to the drama of the peak. It, the peak, with its jutting into the sky, its effect of power, pent-up energy and bigness, results from the relationships of all that was selected, ex-pressed and used, from the very bottom of the canvas up. If we isolate the peak, covering the area beneath (see Plate 53), it looks, to all intents and purposes, like a molehill. Even if we include both peak and foothills (see Plate 54), we do not get the same thing at all—not the bigness, not the power, not the monumentality, not the drama—that the painting of Cézanne’s selection expresses.

---

\* It is interesting to note *in passim* the low-light shadow of the clump of trees near the lower left of the valley—a dramatic element that suggests a later, frequently used motif in the work of de Chirico (*e.g.*, Plate 14).

There is one additional element in the canvas that should be considered for its important expressive rôle—the area that says “sky.” It is an area that rhythmically echoes, in shape and expanse, the area of the valley and holds in and sets off the mountain as the valley holds in and sets off the foreground pyramid of trees and houses. In essence, the sky’s primary function is to provide a sense of relief. Just as there is a silence after my story has been told that is yet a part of the expression that started with the first sad or happy look, so Cézanne’s expression, which began with the first foreground “rumble,” does not end with the mountain peak. Indeed, the “silence” Cézanne ends his dramatic statement with is a relative thing, for within it are reverberations that reinforce it as part of the entire story, the entire scene: it belongs, it completes. After my tale of woe, I do not smile or burst into a guffaw, nor do I immediately launch into a different story. Likewise in the Cézanne, there are no gliding, fluffy clouds, nor is there another mountain, nor too abrupt an ending, such as we might have if we were to cover part of the top of the canvas (see Plate 55), which would compress and crowd the composition below.\*

On the whole, the sky gives us what we have been led more or less to expect, with, however, something we do not quite anticipate—that specific blue color. Were we, for instance, to substitute another color or tone, the area would affect the landscape in a different manner and might well not have sufficient essential elements in common with the rest. In the altered reproduction on Plate 56, for example, the darker sky somehow brings to the fore the contrast of dark and light in the color relationships in the landscape and, by so doing, imparts an ominous kind of drama to the entire scene that obscures or competes with the other qualities. As it is, Cézanne’s sky has a muted luminosity, within which we find echoing thuds of patchwork

---

\* *Cf.*, for example, the airy spaciousness provided by the area of the sky in “Valley of the Arc” with the low-ceiling effect of the sky in “Mont Ste-Victoire from Bibémus Quarry” (Plate 30), in which it measurably contributes to the picture expression of compactness and compression.



patterns that express a movement of shapes and volumes reminiscent of, albeit hushed nearly to imperceptibility, the rhythmic activity in the mountain and valley. The sky gives also an effect of both the near-at-hand and the distant, acting at once as a kind of screen and as deep space, that allows for a light airiness around the volume of the mountain peak which adds to the latter's three-dimensionality. There is no ambiguity here: the nearby and the distant, paradoxical as it may seem, are conveyed at one and the same time without being perceived as either one or the other; rather, the distance expressed does not take us far into depth, for, in fulfilling the dual function described above, the area of the sky both extends the spaciousness of the landscape and helps to contain it. Because of this subtle rendering, the depth beyond the peak does not detract from its volume, as the depth does, for example, from the volumes in Claude le Lorrain (*e.g.*, Plate 23) for his, Claude's, different interest, but, instead, reinforces the peak's upward thrust and its three-dimensional extension into the background space, as well as the sense of the towering power and the blocklike massiveness squatting down over the entire landscape. Thus, although the sky is, in the picture context, an element of silence or relief, everything that makes it up—its color and tone, its size and a shape that helps to wedge the mountain in—is one with, an instrumental part of, the qualitative identity of the painting.

That sky, along with that everything else, by what it is, where, how and with what, completes Cézanne's expression, objectification, of—should we say—the landscape outside of Aix-en-Provence, in Southern France? No. Of Cézanne's feelings about the landscape? No. Rather, it completes the expression, the objectification, of that new situation which was born as Cézanne experienced that landscape on that, not another, occasion. And that objectification is a statement of robust dynamism of rhythms in space, tempered, modified by the centered organization, the pervasively cool tonality and the subtle relationships of color and tone throughout the canvas. The easy transitions of clearly established demarcations of colors, tones and shapes imparts

an overall expression of lyric placidity, serenity and permanence.

To re-emphasize our main point regarding selectivity and personality in ex-pression, let us conclude by looking briefly at another artist's use of the same subject as Cézanne's—Renoir's in his painting "Mont Ste-Victoire" (Plate 57). As we may readily note, the experience expressed is of the landscape view that Cézanne selected. But, to repeat, Renoir expresses the new situation born of *his* experience of, or interaction with, the scene. Yes, we may recognize the subject facts that Cézanne, too, used, but now the volumes float, glide, swim in a color ambiance, and the color itself warbles a song of joy and of warmth—all ex-pressed from the artist, Renoir, as well as from the landscape. Note, for instance, that Renoir did not select the cypresses, but chose, instead, the olive trees, because their twisting curvaceousness and their tufty foliage answered *his* aesthetic purpose. Incidentally, what he ex-presses from himself includes, besides his knowledge of the Venetians and the Impressionists, his knowledge of Cézanne. For example, he uses hatchings at the top of the mountain that chop it up into facets and planes. Yet, while Cézanne's planes affected Renoir, he, in turn, affected them. They have become, in his painting, gentle, and they shimmer with the color of mother-of-pearl. In short, another experience, another expression.

Now, to sum up our analysis of the process of expressing, we shall ask the following two questions. First, can experience exist without expression? Yes, of course; but when it does, it is never quite so clear in significance, never so intelligently enjoyed or coped with. And, second, can expression exist without experience? No; all there could be is a sham of expression, a mere pretense. As George Santayana states, "Intent though it vaults high must have something to spring from, or it would lend meaning to nothing."\*

To state our point once more: the picture is the artist's

---

\* *The Life of Reason, or The Phases of Human Progress: Reason in Science*, Charles Scribner's Sons, (New York, 1906), pp. 181-182.



expression and, as such, has its source in a genuinely felt experience. Hence, all that an artist can do when he paints is to re-create in terms of qualities belonging to his medium—purposively selected, used and organized—not what was, not his feelings, but the new situation that arises from his interacting with the subject; and that situation develops as the very process of expressing unfolds.\*

And so, *there* is the artist's expression, his painting. And *here* are we, the would-be recipients. But, like the pro-

---

\* Having made our primary points about the process of ex-pressing, we shall briefly digress, hopefully to some purpose, and consider for a moment the similarity between expressing, forming opinions and passing judgements, with particular reference to the relevance of these activities to our understanding of what it is that an artist does in his work.

In general, we might begin by noting that all three activities—expressing the meaning of our feelings, forming opinions and passing judgements or proffering what may be construed as criticisms—are near to being synonymous: each entails the same basic policy of selection—a determination of what is “right”—and its counterpart, rejection—a determination of what is “wrong”—on the basis of personality, interests, background, point of view, etc.; and each looks forward to the same underlying consequence of establishing the relative meaning, the here-and-now significance, of a given objective circumstance or situation. Each, in other words, derives from or represents the completion of an experience.

As we have said earlier (Violette de Mazia, “Method,” *The Barnes Foundation Journal of the Art Department*, Vol. I, No. 1, Spring, 1970, *ibid.*, pp. 3–18), in a genuine experience, and the expression of its meaning, our intelligence is engaged, and our knowledge acquired from previous experiences is fed upon and adapted, by way of our intellect and imagination, to the data of the new circumstances. This holds true in every instance of experience, regardless of whether the final result be a painting, a practical decision or an observation to be stored for later use. And, by the same token, the artist's created piece of work, inasmuch as it expresses the meaning of an experience, states and records his thoughts about, his views or his considered opinion of a particular part of the outside world to which he responded or reacted on a specific occasion. He “rights” in his work what in his judgement he finds—which, by his changing of it, he so declares it to be—“wrong,” *i.e.*, unsatisfying from his aesthetic point of view, incongruous to what he seeks to express. And his opinion or judgement, his implied criticism, is objectively stated, depending, as it does, on elements garnered from both interacting participants in the experience—the outside stimulus, now the object of his comment, and his own intellectual and emotional makeup.

To illustrate the above principle, let us look once more at Pippin's “Friends Meetinghouse at Birmingham, Pa.” (Fold-out Plate 16). Here the artist deemed “wrong,” according to his interest at that time, the fact, among others, that the gable side and the front of the building sat at an angle to each other (see Plate 15) and considered “right” that they align themselves on a single, continuous, frontal plane. Accordingly, he adjusted that aspect of the building

verbial horse who may be led to water but not be made to drink, we must in some way be enticed by, be thirsty for, what the artist's piece offers in order to perceive it. In our next essay, we shall consider that aspect of a work of art which by its nature entices us because we are by our nature thirsty for it—*i.e.*, the decorative aspect.

---

in his painting, expressed *his* experience of the scene, which thereafter stands as his personal commentary on or opinion of the factual situation he confronted at that time. The same may be said of Cézanne when he painted his "Valley of the Arc" (Fold-out Plate 59). For that picture purpose, the artist judged fluid, curvaceous, gently tufted olive trees, fluffy, fleeting clouds, dainty color warblings, and such, to be "wrong"; his opinion, as revealed by that canvas, was that that part of nature should have a grandeur, that the valley of the Arc with the Mont Ste-Victoire is of a majestic, set, rigid monumentality and that color and pattern should be restrained in sensuousness, made, instead, austere. Renoir (Plate 57), on the other hand, Churchill (Plate 18), Hartley (Plates 50, 51 and 52) and a wide variety of other painters who used the same landscape as the subject of their pictures reached their own, different, conclusions, formed their own distinctive judgements of the meaning of the scene and, as a result, discarded what in their respective opinions was "wrong," "righting" the situation by infusing it with quite other qualities and attributes. Again, each did so in his personal fashion, not unlike, in principle, what Cézanne himself did on different occasions as he passed judgement each time on even his own earlier statements or opinions. (Consult footnote, pp. 18-25.)

It is, of course to be understood, as we indicated before, that judging, forming opinions, etc., as we have described these actions, are not exclusive to the artist vis-à-vis his work; they are part of having an experience and giving expression to it, whatever be the area of interest, the field of endeavor and the medium employed. As it is true that critics in all walks of life are by no means infallible, so it is self-evident that the fact that an artist makes such judgements, such alterations in what the world offers him, by no means guarantees the merit of his expression. That depends, as we know, on how, and with what is in him, the artist answers the continuing challenge to his opinions.

In the light of the preceding remarks, we may wonder whether it is not precisely on account of specific new opinions, arrived at, formulated and made concrete in their work, that artists true to their beliefs, irrespective of outsiders' attitudes, "criticise" their own previous achievements, their objectified opinions, by re-treating a similar theme or re-experiencing a same topic, and sometimes going as far as physically destroying the earlier statements: painting them out (I think of Matisse repainting in a red-rose color scheme [Plate 60] what was originally a blue-based painting of his and of Glackens' "Racetrack" [Plate 61], a riot of vivid color areas, which the artist painted over the same scene previously executed in somber tones); throwing them out the window, as Cézanne is reputed to have done; burning them, to wit, Rouault; or even disowning their very authorship, as in the case of de Chirico. Less dramatic, but still in the same vein, was Maurice Prendergast's frequent comment to Dr. Barnes, "Al, I wish you'd let me have that picture [one of the canvasses Dr. Barnes had purchased from the artist] back for a while; I want to change a few things in it,"



# Death and Creativity

by HENRY F. NARDONE, Ph.D.\*

*. . . Death, and its ever present possibility makes love, passionate love, more possible. I wonder if we could love passionately, if ecstasy would be possible at all, if we knew we'd never die.*

—From a letter by Abraham Maslow  
written while recuperating from a  
heart attack.<sup>1</sup>

RECENTLY Miss Violette de Mazia began a lecture in the first-year art appreciation class at The Barnes Foundation by admonishing her students for being too involved in noisy and banal conversation before class. She noted that their school sessions were quickly coming to an end and that they thus might more profitably spend their time studying the collection. This admonition stuck in my mind and started me wondering. Each man's life is a journey with its beginning and its inevitable end. What role does man's death and, in particular, the consciousness of death play in his creative and artistic endeavors? Is there any connection between the consciousness of death and the growth of individuality and style in an artist?

Art, as John Dewey tells us, is nothing more than the celebration of the things of ordinary experience.<sup>2</sup> What is more ordinary than birth, marriage, and death? Small wonder, then, that death is a common theme in art, occurring in all styles and going back to the first markings of the cave man. Furthermore, since the most powerful emotions in man are tied to his basic instincts, and since the most basic of these is self-preservation, it is only natural that death should be a great stimulus to man's creative imagination. One philosopher puts it this way: "Our feelings about death are the subtlest of all motivators, but also the strongest. No problem in the human condition has been subject to man's

---

\* Assistant Professor of Philosophy, King's College, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and participant in The Barnes Foundation Course in the Philosophy and Appreciation of Art.

creative imagination more than the prospect of his own cessation."<sup>3</sup>

There are various kinds of fears associated with death. Some are only imaginary, such as being buried alive; others are realistic, such as the fear of suffering, often a companion of death.

A distinct and seemingly universal fear is the fear of non-existence. It is not fear of possible punishment in some hell or purgatory (although this is a real fear for many), nor is it merely a fear of the unknown. Rather, one can experience a relentless anxiety about nonexistence itself. One can fear the *experience* of nonbeing, not recognizing that this is a contradiction in terms. However, a rational response to an irrational fear is no solution.<sup>4</sup>

Because of this fear, shared by both those who believe in an afterlife and those who do not, the human mind has rationalized a variety of comforting alternatives. It allows us to feel that *something of us* is left after we cease to exist. Biological immortality gives a parent the comfort of knowing that there will be a continuity of his name and germ plasm in his offspring. A social immortality is sought by the artist who, for instance, sees his works as "children," which, as genuine offspring, literally carry his name into the future and, insofar as they represent his "finding of himself," carry his very presence there too. One author describes this kind of immortality perfectly when he writes:

Death plays an important part in each day of my life. I have worked half in shadow, half in sun all of my life. When I put my new book, *The Halloween Tree* (a history of death in the world, really) in the mail eight weeks ago, I cried half-aloud: "There you are, death, one up on you again!" My books are victories against darkness, if only for a small while. Each story I write is a candle lit for my own burial plot which it may take some few years to blow out. More than many writers, I have known this fact about myself since I was a child. It puts me to work each day with a special sad—sweet—happy urgency.<sup>5</sup>

Not only is mortality a great stimulus to man's artistic creativity, but also it seems that without it human life, as presently constituted, would seem to lose any enduring



meaning and interest. This point is illustrated dramatically in the novel *All Men Are Mortal* by Simone de Beauvoir. One of the main characters, Raymond Fosca, feared death intensely: life was too tragically short for him to accomplish anything great for the welfare of the people of his thirteenth-century city, Carmona. Offered an elixir of immortality by an old Jew who had discovered it in Egypt, he nevertheless refused to drink it because he doubted the value of life without end. His brother Count Fosca, on the other hand, seeing that the elixir included not only immunity to death but also the guarantee of perpetual youth, drank the elixir. Shortly after, he took on the reign of Carmona and proceeded to build buildings, extend his province, wage wars, and improve the life of his people. He loved often, married often, saw his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren die. This went on for two centuries, at which time he became aware that he had accomplished no more than he could have in a reign of a few years. Furthermore, his subjects and his own children, instead of feeling admiration and love, feared him and his grandiose ideas and forced him to leave Carmona. He then became involved in an abortive plot to bring about universal domination with Emperor Charles V. In the seventeenth century, still seeking a meaningful and exciting life, he participated in the discovery of Canada. Again for the same motive, he became, in the eighteenth century, deeply involved with French aristocrats who dreamed of progress and liberty and participated in the French Revolution, with his great-grandchildren fighting by his side. He continued for centuries fighting for the cause of freedom and justice, while his continuous succession of wives and children, friends and comrades grew old and died. Little by little, Count Fosca became conscious of his boredom. As he grew aware of the cyclical pattern of advancement and regression, he stopped believing in the future of human progress and the possibility of generous men furthering the cause of humanity. Soon, also, his capacity to love and beget children became meaningless. Indeed, from the viewpoint he acquired over the centuries, all his deepest emotions began to seem ephemeral: he had known too many springtimes, too many loves, too many dreams really

to appreciate any of them. Hence, he came to realize that only those who must die are truly capable of a meaningful productive, and creative life; they alone are able to believe in the "reality" of great projects and the future. The implicit philosophical conclusion one can draw from the Simone de Beauvoir novel, *Ignace Lepp*, the psychiatrist, tells us, is this: "It is good that man is mortal, for only on this condition can his existence be dramatic and intense."<sup>6</sup>

Death is a theme upon which almost all great men of letters have written. The great divide among them is between those who are god-centered and argue that only the hope of personal immortality will ever reconcile men to death and those who are man-centered and argue that the fear of death may be diminished or overcome even when death is accepted as the ultimate extinction of the individual person. Among the second group, which is remarkably heterogeneous, we shall focus on the Existentialists.

Although most of the great writers have touched on the problem of death, as we have said, few have dealt with it in the extensive and detailed way as have the Existentialists. From Kierkegaard to Sartre, they have more or less consistently endorsed Schopenhauer's contention that death is the muse of philosophy. Camus' declaration in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that suicide is the only genuine philosophical issue is an extreme but notable case in point.<sup>7</sup> The question which we hope to pursue is whether or not death is not for some men, as the German Existentialist Heidegger seems to suggest, a muse of art as well.

To clarify the Existentialists' approach to death, it will be helpful to contrast it with the more familiar view of the Stoics. Seneca, their main spokesman, maintained that the proper attitude towards death is to accept it with dignity, and the right way to overcome the fear of death is to think of it constantly. The important thing, however, is to think of it in the proper manner, being aware that we are but parts of nature and must reconcile ourselves to our allotted roles. Seneca liked to compare life to a part in a play, whose limits ought to satisfy us, since they satisfy the author. He held that the fear of death displays a baseness wholly incompatible with the dignity and calm of the true philos-



opher, who has learned to emancipate himself from finite concerns. Essential to the Stoic outlook was the Platonic view that philosophizing means learning to die—that is, learning to commune with the eternal through the act of philosophic contemplation.

Like the Stoics, the Existentialists would have us think constantly of death. Unlike the Stoics, however, they do not offer us the consolation of belief in a providential order of nature. From the standpoint of Being or Nature, the death of the individual is meaningless or absurd. For them complete human well-being or happiness, at least as traditionally conceived, is impossible to achieve; and if the individual is to experience those rewarding values that life does permit, he must uncompromisingly embrace the tragedy of the human condition, clear-headedly acknowledging such evils as death.

Heidegger and Sartre, like most Existentialists, urge us to cultivate the awareness of death mainly as a way to heighten our sense of life. Such knowledge of death, they argue, gives to life a sense of urgency that it otherwise lacks. Indeed, life acquires verve and meaning only for the person who lives in the shadow of death and resolutely faces the fact that each of us is condemned to die. For the Existentialist, the ever renewed consciousness of death shatters the banality of everyday existence and liberates us from the petty mentality of the ordinary man. This “ordinary man,” whom Heidegger calls, the “they-man,” is the man of everydayness who comfortably identifies himself with the anonymous crowd and attempts to divert any occupation with the thought of death by the pursuit of comfort and pleasure.

In agreement with the majority of the Existentialists on the capacity of death to intensify the felt-quality of experience, Heidegger makes the additional claim that the awareness of death confers upon a man a sense of his own individuality. Dying, he says, is the one thing no one can do for another; each of us must die alone. To shut out the consciousness of death is, therefore, to refuse one’s individuality and to live inauthentically. The inauthentic self-awareness, the “they-self” of the ordinary man, according to Heidegger,

leads him to interpret death in such a way as to convince himself that death is not really his own.

The technique by which the "they-self" achieves this is to treat death always as an actuality never as a possibility. As long as one is conscious, *actual* death belongs to someone else. Thus, if I treat death only as an actuality and never as a possibility, I can never consider my own death<sup>8</sup>. For Heidegger, then, I can only attain authentic existence when I realize that my being is a "being going-to-die" (*Sein zum Tode*) and that dying is the only thing that nobody can do for me; and only insofar as I can maintain the consciousness that I must face death alone can I truly experience the sense of my own individuality.

The view that one's consciousness of death clarifies and intensifies one's individual self-awareness is found in other Existentialists as well, such as Kierkegaard and Unamuno. But unlike the latter two, Heidegger does not entertain the possibility of personal survival after death. What he commends to us, as an alternately more effective technique to allay man's anxiety about death, is that we embrace our finitude and actively assume our being as "going-to-die." Then death, rather than striking us down as something from the outside and as something over which we have no control, will be something coming from within and with which we participate. Rather than seeing death as something extraneous to what it means to be a man, it should be viewed as something which constitutes human existence as a fulfillment in a somewhat analogous way that the ripeness of fruit constitutes the meaning of what it means to be fruit. This approach alone, Heidegger argues, is authentic and far more effective in alleviating death's terror than the subterfuge of a belief in personal immortality. Also, by embracing our future death as our own personal possibility, not avoiding it by taking flight to a depersonalized death as epitomized in the phrase "All men must die," we become the free, authentic individuals that we can and should be.

Could it be that the consciousness of his own death is necessary for an artist to achieve his own uniqueness and style? Must an artist face his own death as *his* certain



future possibility, as Heidegger describes it, before he achieves authenticity and honesty in his work?

Recognition of the fact that each artist, as each man, must die his own death in solitude could be a key that unlocks the door that keeps him from his true self, as Heidegger suggests. Flaubert says, "An artist must be in his works like God in Creation, invisible, and all-powerful; he should be everywhere felt, but nowhere seen."<sup>9</sup> But how can an artist be as God in his work if he has not come to know his true personality or even his own identity? One thing is clear, if he is to put himself in his work and thus become truly creative, he must come to know himself in some way.

Although it is impossible to get a full understanding of the creative process of any artist, one must admit that even a small sampling of the world's great literature, paintings, and music demonstrates that the consciousness of death has been generally keen, pervasive, and poignant in all ages.<sup>10</sup> Michelangelo, for example, who had such great energy and vitality, confessed that all his thoughts were overshadowed by the notion of death. The three years from 1919 to 1922 in the life of the artist Chaim Soutine are considered his most prolific: his accelerated production during that time has been attributed to the alarm at the death of his friend Modigliani, who died in 1920 at the height of his career. Charles Baudelaire, the French poet of the nineteenth century, says in his *Death of Artists*, "*C'est la mort, planant comme un soleil nouveau,/Fera épanouir les fleurs de leur cerveau*" (It is death, radiating like a new sun,/will make bloom the flowers of their brains.)

Can it be that some modern artists have repressed the consciousness of death and as a result lost something of the intensity and love of life that such consciousness brings? One contemporary art historian suggests that since our present age rejects the death image as important, this may indicate "a need to counteract the spirit of dejection caused by the dreadful events witnessed during the last hundred years. . . . Our present age has witnessed mass murders and mass death overriding the disasters wrought by the plagues at the end of the Middle Ages, a period exceptionally rich in the creation of death images."<sup>11</sup>

Of course, although there may be a lack of "death images" or representations of death in our time, this need not indicate that there is not, at least subconsciously, an awareness of the presence of death. In this regard Henri Matisse stated that he would like his art to function as a mental soother for the human race.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the denial of death consciously or subconsciously does not get rid of the fact of death. Our age fights oppressive thoughts by denying them rather than facing them squarely. Rollo May argues that there is a great repression of death in our time:

The ways we repress death and its symbolism are amazingly like the ways the Victorians repressed sex. Death is obscene, unmentionable, pornographic; if sex was nasty, death is a nasty mistake. . . . We dress death up in grotesquely colorful caskets in the same way Victorian women camouflaged their bodies by means of voluminous dresses. We throw flowers on the casket to make death smell better.<sup>13</sup>

May also contends that contemporary man's repression of death is the cause of his obsession with sex, which serves as a cover for his unacknowledged fear of death. "Repression of death equals obsession with sex. Sex is the easiest way to prove our vitality, to demonstrate we are still 'young,' attractive, and virile, to prove we are not dead yet."<sup>14</sup>

Can it be that for many would-be artists of today the repression of the idea of death has resulted in the confusion of social for aesthetic values—as if vitality were synonymous with "relevance"? Can it be also that this repression is in some part the reason why some would-be artists emphasize innovation for its own sake, use gimmicky approaches to their art, or try for sensational effects—as if to be always new, changing were to be perpetually young, undying?

Death is a macrocosm of the smaller rhythms of life: life consists of small episodes of starts and finishes, awareness and forgetfulness, waking and sleeping, and there is a natural tendency to make the projects of wakefulness complete, to finish tasks before retiring. This provides a satisfaction as well as an inducement to carry through on some activity until it is either complete or achieves some unity or totality. For creative work, in general, we think and feel in terms of



beginning and ending; it is only mechanical repetition, the ticking of a clock, a repetitive, assembly-line sequence that seems to go on endlessly, without meaning.<sup>15</sup>

Each man's life is inexorably bounded by his own birth and death. The very nature of temporality as a fundamental constituent of life drives us to wrest meaning and significance from it.<sup>16</sup> The awareness of death can color all the decisions of one's life and give them a certain seriousness. The anticipation of death, far from being morbid and life-denying, can provide a foundation of value by giving a deepened sense of time's preciousness and the singularity of opportunity.

It seems, then, that the Existentialists make a good case for believing that the consciousness of death intensifies the value of life, as Heidegger does for believing that without such consciousness one cannot attain authenticity and individuality. If this be true, it is possible that for the man who also happens to be a painter, a pianist, a writer, consciousness of death can serve, at least in part, as the path to the development of his own style and the realization of his goal to becoming a genuine artist.

#### Notes

1. Quoted in Rollo May, *Love and Will*, (New York: Norton, Inc., 1969), p. 99.
2. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958), p. 11.
3. Quoted in James L. Christian, *Philosophy, An Introduction to the Art of Wondering*, (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1973), p. 465.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 469.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 476.
6. Ignace Lepp, *Death and Its Mysteries*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 129.
7. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans., J. O'Brien, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955), p. 21.
8. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 296-297.
9. Francis Steegmuller, ed., *The Selected Letters of Gustave Flaubert*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, Inc., 1953), p. 195.
10. Lepp, p. 129.
11. Carla Gottlieb, "Modern Art and Death," *The Meaning of Death*, ed., Herman Feifel, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 157.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
13. May, p. 106.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
15. I am greatly indebted to Miss de Mazia here and in other areas of this article for her suggestions both general and specific.
16. James T. Laney, "Ethics and Death," *Perspectives on Death*, ed., Liston O. Mills, (New York: Abington Press, 1969), p. 235.



# THREE HAIKU FOR AUTUMN

*by* PATRICIA NEUBAUER\*

1.

Grackles carefully  
turning over fallen leaves  
read autumn's secrets.

2.

Sun, don your pale cloak,  
step over the doorsill of  
the sad equinox.

3.

Magic circle of  
lamplight fends off the dragon  
of desolate night.

---

\* Alumna of the Art Department

# Art and Form in Two Poems\*

*by* LUCY RILEY†

JUST what is Poetry? The dictionary‡ tells us that it is: “(a) metrical writing; verse.” Let us demonstrate this statement:

Mary had a little lamb;  
Its fleece was white as snow;  
And everywhere that Mary went,  
The lamb was sure to go.

Can we deny that this little piece meets the specifications of the above explanation? It does, and, therefore, it is poetry as the dictionary describes the term.

We have, however, a further question to ask: is it art? The dictionary offers more on the topic that may help with this query: “(b) poetry is writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound and rhythm.” Here we seem to be given a somewhat meaningful, objective idea of what constitutes a poem and a means for assessing it as art. And on the basis of the implicit criteria in this second definition we might wonder whether the bit of verse we cited above answers to the requirements.

The preceding definitions represent, by necessity, the briefest of summaries of the traits of poetry as a whole and, as such, provide little more than a set of formulae for judging it; they do not provide matter for understanding it as creatively expressive. The dictionary, therefore, is of little use for our purposes. Of little use, too, is the academic community, which does not look fondly on objectifying criticism or judgement of any work of art: their approach

---

\* Originally presented as a talk to the Seminar of the Art Department.

† Member of the Seminar of the Art Department.

‡ Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary.



presupposes that a person automatically meets with the poetic experience and immediately recognizes and is carried away by its glories—a viewpoint that denies everything that has been discovered about man's learning experiences, whether of an aesthetic or scientific nature. Our concern, on the other hand, is with understanding, and we shall, accordingly, take a more leisurely look at the nature of poetry and the process of its creation.

In any art form—and the forms are never-ending; like the universe, they stretch into infinity—there must first be a planning, a composing, a selecting, an ordering out of chaos. Whether the artist does this on a conscious or an unconscious level matters little. What does matter is that he be able to shape his world according to a personal insight into its meanings.

Every art form must embody qualities that are significant to the whole of mankind, qualities that all men seek in their contact with the world, thus qualities that we may call broad human values. The word "broad" used in this context is not chosen lightly: these human values touch all of us and are as necessary to our existence as our very breath; the littlest babe will be all but destroyed if, even in his narrow world, there is no sense of warmth, no stability, no soft, gentle sounds and touches around him. And as he grows he will continue to seek for those experiences in which such qualities may be found, and he will also search for other qualities, such as strength, power, drama, intricacy, etc., which express the excitement of living, which quicken his pulse and help him to realize that his world is rich and varied and has much to offer him.

It is with these qualities, and the multitude of others discovered in our interaction with the world, that the artist is concerned. Insofar as his work is art, the same qualities are incorporated in it in such a way that they are of interest primarily as an effect of the artist's use of his medium, and not merely because they awaken some memory of our experience of them elsewhere.

In every work of art, too, there is a sense of the artist's individuality and a sense of conviction as to that work having been derived from the world of common experience.

That is, the artist's work bears the stamp of *his* personality, *his* creativeness, and it is anchored in something we all know, including the traditions of perception within the medium used.

Unity and variety are also necessary ingredients in an aesthetic entity. Try for just one moment to imagine a world all grey in tone as far as the eye can see or a piece of music that never changes in pitch or volume; it is frightening to contemplate. And equally frightening is a world in which no relationships exist between one element and another, a world of unrelieved variety, of chaos.

With this background we come to the word "form," and it is on this that I shall base my discussion of the art of poetry. How do we define the word? Form, in both its everyday and its aesthetic meaning, refers to overall identity; it is what makes up the distinctive character, the "itness," of, for instance, a table, a chair, a bus, a symphony, a piece of literature.

Let us now apply this definition to a concrete situation. To begin with, any object or thing has, by the mere fact of being, certain qualities. A flowerpot, for example, is round; its color is warm; its surface cold and hard, smooth to the touch; it is of a certain dimension that we may perceive as big or small. All these words—round, warm, cold, hard, smooth, big or small—designate qualities that belong to the entity of a flowerpot. But, if we pause to consider, we find that such qualities may also be used to describe many other objects—a stone, a metal container, a table top, and so on. Nevertheless, we do not confuse these various objects, for each of them offers a specific, unique embodiment of the qualities cited. Thus, we know our object is a flowerpot, first, because we see the particular facts that comprise the qualities both in relationship to each other and, together, in relationship to other objects. In other words, we know our object is a flowerpot because its parts make up a set of relationships having a definite and finite sensuous order. That is its form.

Before any object is recognizable, its form must be grasped and absorbed. Anything without form simply will have no meaning to us. At the same time, everything we



experience has more than one form, for what we perceive depends also upon the interests, the point of view, we bring to bear, causing us to abstract and select to see those aspects or qualities in an object or situation that have the greatest meaning for us.

Form, as we noted, refers to the fact of matter being organized into a distinctive whole. At the same time, however, the constituent matter separately also represents an embodying form in relationship to the matter of which it is composed: thus, the "houseness" of a given house will depend on the particular character and organization of its rooms; likewise, if we choose to study one room of that house, then the room becomes the source of our idea of form and the relationships that exist within that room the matter.

So, too, poetry, whatever else it may have for us, if it provides a complete aesthetic experience, has form. It has shape, order, coherence, balance; it has a rhythmic form, a form of content according to the words and the images used, a form of presentation, and, overall, a form of meaning, a unity or singleness of expression, without which it could have no poetic significance.

Poetry speaks to us of many things—of life and death and all that lies between. From this wide spectrum of possibilities, I have chosen to consider the poetry of love and love's denial, using two poems, one presenting a view of love and one presenting a view of its antithesis, its mirror-image—hate.

Love has been described in many ways. Poets and playwrights, songwriters and painters have attempted to capture this ephemeral emotion, this "mystical fusion of souls," from the earliest times. All men know of its pleasures and pains and for as long as we can trace have called the poetic expression of love "art."

"By art the ships are onward sped by sails and oars; by art are the light chariots, by art is Love, to be guided," wrote Ovid in the misty past. Ovid was born in Sulmo, a small town ninety miles from Rome, in 43 B.C., one year after the assassination of Julius Caesar. His parents belonged to the wealthy middle class and were able to give him every

advantage. At the age of twenty-three, after a formal education and a period of travel in Greece, Asia Minor, and Sicily, he settled in Rome, determined to pursue a literary career. His "Art of Love" is the product of his middle age.

Roman poetry sprang from the Greek tradition. The beginnings of the Greek elegy are lost to us; we can only guess that it is the same as the form found in Asia Minor, having made its way there through the cultural exchange that then existed between East and West. Metrically the Greek elegy was an offshoot of the Greek epic. The elegiac poem, however, did not replace the epic, but represents an adaptation and modification of it.

It was this tradition that Ovid inherited and, in his love poetry, further enriched with his own innovations. There are, to be sure, love poems in Greek literature, but these do not have the sense of personal experience that Ovid's bring to the form.

Ovid's use of mythology and his imagery also spring from the Greeks. Water as an image, for instance, is found quite frequently in the work of both, but, where in Greek poetry we read of mighty fountains, in Ovid we read of streams and rivers and seas upon which one may sail or row or cast his nets.

Before beginning with the poem itself, we should make note of the fact that we shall be dealing with the work in translation, albeit a poet's interpretive translation. We are, for the most part, more used to accepting interpretive translation in music than in poetry. What a composer has expressed in his original composition is invariably changed when a conductor or performer imposes himself upon the work, for it is played through another's ears, another's perceptions and experiences; one need only listen to two aesthetically knowledgeable conductors to hear how a musical work can change, yet still, presumably, express the composer's intent.

The same may also be said of the literary translator's "performance": though the specific words he uses are entirely different from those of the writer and at least somewhat different from those of another translator, yet, if he is an artist, he will give us the essentials of the rhythmic patterns, the potency of the meanings and images, and the



atmosphere that the writer's poem evokes in its original language. So, just as in music we may speak of Toscanini's or Ormandy's Mozart or Richter's or Gould's Bach, with this poem we may speak of Humphries'\* Ovid.

And now Ovid's poem:

### The Art of Love

First: be a confident soul, and spread your nets with assurance.

Women can always be caught; that's the first rule of the game.

Sooner would birds in the spring be silent, or locusts in August,

Sooner would hounds run away when the fierce rabbits pursue,  
Than would a woman, well-wooed, refuse to succumb to a lover;

She'll make you think she means No! while she is planning her Yes!  
Love on the sly delights men; it is equally pleasing to women.

Men are poor at pretense; women can hide their desire.

It's a convention, no more, that men play the part of pursuer.

Women don't run after us; mousetraps don't run after mice.

In the Latin elegy we find a number of elegiac couplets. This type of couplet is formed by two lines of irregular length—an alternating sequence of the hexameter, which is a line of verse having six metrical feet, and the pentameter, which has five. A foot (or measure) is a certain number of syllables that makes up part of a poetic line, each syllable corresponding to a beat in a bar of music.

For this kind of poetry we need to know only two kinds of feet (or measures), expressed thus:

the Dactyl = long-short-short (/ ~ ~)

the Spondee = long-long (/ /)

Thus the hexameter line has six metrical feet:

five of / ~ ~ and one / /.

The pentameter line has five metrical feet:

four of / ~ ~ and one / /.

We might call these two kinds of line metrical cousins, for they bear a definite family resemblance, a family unity, and yet are different enough in character to provide the variety necessary to sustain our interest.

---

\* The translator is Rolfe Humphries.

Here, perhaps, might be a good place to clarify the words rhythm and meter. We know that rhythm in music, poetry, or nature, etc., usually means a more or less recurring beat, a repetition of pulsation. When we reduce the sense of pulsation to law, to a deliberate, measurable system, then it becomes meter.

Ovid compared his type of metrical movement—two lines of irregular length—to the rise and fall of a jet of water. “In six numbers let my work rise, and sink again in five.” And he went on to describe his elegy as being like a beautiful woman with perfumed hair, clad in a gauzy robe. “The fact,” he continued, “that one of her feet is longer than the other only adds to her charm.”

One might be tempted to call the couplet form a simple pattern of two-line verse. It could quite probably rather easily become so, and become intolerably monotonous and boring in the reading. In our poem, however, the couplet form is a unifying agent by which the parts of the work, its couplets, are held together as a unit (a stanza), with variation afforded by the choice of words, the use of imagery, and the different meter combinations. Further, the couplet serves not only to unify the matter within the stanza, but helps, by its recurrence, to make the stanza an integral part of the whole work.

The stanza of any poem, or its “skeleton,” if I may use the word, is made up of metrical feet built into lines of certain lengths. These lines, of varying number, are built into stanzas, and the stanza or stanzas become the poem. Generally speaking, each stanza makes a step forward in the development of an idea. Until quite recently the poet’s use of the stanza pattern was what helped poetry to be poetry. Poetry today, with its use of free verse, does not normally have this format.

The couplet nearly always contains a single thought, a sentence rounded in itself. The pauses and breaks suggested by the meaning, however, tend to function, to coincide, with those required by the rhythmical pattern.

Thus a sense of balance and order is also set up in this form. If there were ten lines with different meters in one stanza, two in another, seven in another, and so on, the result would be



chaos and disruption—the very opposite of the poet's intent. With sudden shifts of meter and rhythm, tensions would build up, pulling and tearing at the fabric of the piece.

So, for the poet's purposes—the discussion, the teaching, of the delights of love—this form of the couplet is perfect. It flows along, creating a lyrical, yet insistent musical quality, and, in its gentle beats, a sense of graceful movement is set up. There is nothing static in this poem.

Here may I suggest that, just as music has no real life without sound, no more does poetry. If poetry is to have its fullest existence, it should be sounded, heard. And what of the sound of Ovid's poem? How has it been used? Let us listen to the first couplet as the poet gives advice:

First: be a confident soul, and spread your nets with assurance.

Women can always be caught; that's the first rule of the game.

The rhythm and meter, though of irregular length, flow rather sedately.

In the next couplet we find the letter "s" used alliteratively, *i.e.*, repeated in words that follow each other at close intervals:

Sooner would birds in the spring be silent, or locusts in August,

Sooner would hounds run away when the fierce rabbits pursue,

By the poet's use of the "s" sound, we are given a particular variation on the character of the first couplet, for the echoing sibilant sounds create a kind of intensity of their own, one which accords with the progression of content from a general statement to particular elaborative analogy. It is not, of course, that we cannot find the "s" in the first couplet, but that in the second its placement in the words, its frequency, and its pattern insist upon it, make it an element of the drama and interest of the expressed thought. At the same time, however, it occurs within the meter of the couplet, so that this second unit does not strain to break away, is not isolated from the previous couplet. In short, the relationship between the two is preserved.

Since poetry is not just sounds, but words as well, the choice of words, with an ear to their meaning, the imagery they evoke, their color and association, plays a role in the

effect. The poet, then, is not content to make a bare assertion that "women can always be caught." Instead, he wishes to show us, to persuade us, that this is so, and he calls upon our experience to help him: he compares the likelihood of a woman well-wooded escaping to that of birds being silent in the spring and hounds running from rabbits. Since we know that birds are almost never silent and that hounds would never, never run from rabbits—since we know these suppositions are absurd—we would be fools not to follow the poet's gentle persuasion that a woman well-wooded can be caught.

A second feature of the poet's use of words is his disposing them in parallel sequences of idea or thought. We tend to think of anything being parallel to another as the two extending in the same direction, everywhere equidistant—rows of trees bordering each side of an avenue, for instance. We also use the term parallel to refer to ideas that can readily be compared. For example:

Spread your nets with assurance. Women can always be caught.

Or:

Women don't run after us; mousetraps don't run after mice.

By using words in this way, giving us two varying approaches to the same general idea, the poet leads us to an easy experience of his imagery, the imaginative and decorative content of his phrases as they unfold—in keeping with the gentle, lyrical tone of the work.

What of Ovid's particular choice of words? Certainly, he does not call upon those that imply power and drama. Since his poem is lyrical, a gentle singing, he speaks, rather, of birds in the spring, of hounds and rabbits—things that, in this context of delicately fleeting reference, suggest the charm of nature and do so with a sense of wit and a touch of humorous surprise.

Words by their nature tend to be illustrative, but through Ovid's complex use of them—drawing upon their meaning, their power to evoke images, their sounds, their potential for establishing rhythms and meters—he makes them serve



a poetic, aesthetic design, one qualified by novelty and decorativeness. Perhaps we may see these traits more clearly if we compare the poem to a two-part invention by Bach: both poem and musical piece are lyrical yet restrained; both are made of parallel phrases; both are linear in structure with no strong accents or beats, no extreme louds or softs, no great crescendos, no great tonalities, yet, withal, a grace, directness, and style.

Ovid, here, sees himself as the teacher, the advisor. It would hardly do for him to expound passionately on his theme: a teacher's role—certainly in Ovid's meaning of the word—is to lead, advise, suggest, but to do so gracefully and with as much wit as possible. Passion and strong drama are antithetical to his intent; elegance, lyricism, sparkling gaiety, delicacy, and balance—the transferred qualities of a rippling stream—are what we find, and a tongue-in-cheek quality, fitting perhaps for the poet's belief that, although love is to be sought, we must not be consumed by its passions.

By forming and organizing the parts, the elements, the forms, by integrating and by coördinating them into a whole for his particular purpose, the poet has been able to give us, and we have been able to be a part of, his discovery and journey into the aesthetic experience.

The enjoyment of Ovid's works and their influence have come down to us through the centuries. In the twelfth century Ovid's popularity was as great as that of Vergil and Horace. Before that century came to a close his works had been accepted not only among poets who wrote in Latin, but also in centers of culture, among the Troubadours and Minnesingers and the poets of northern France. In the thirteenth century his works were more widely read than any other Latin poet's. Although Ovid's prestige was never again to be so high as it had been in the thirteenth century, his influence, both direct and indirect, continued to be felt through later centuries.

The sonnet is an extremely flexible verse form. It originated in the thirteenth century in Italy and was "standardized" for that language by Petrarch (1304–1374), an Italian poet and humanist. The form became popular in

France and England. Shakespeare (1564–1616), John Milton (1608–1674), and William Wordsworth (1770–1850) are regarded as the English masters of the sonnet. As originally brought over from the Italian, the sonnet was to express one, and only one, idea or mood. In music we can find its counterpart in the Chopin Preludes, each Prelude expressing a specific mood.

At first, sonnets were light in content, but they soon became more serious, until finally they were used to express the most exalted thoughts. As English poets continued to use the sonnet form, it was altered and modified until it barely resembled the original Italian version.\*

I have chosen to discuss Shakespeare's Sonnet 129. In writing this particular sonnet, the poet wishes us to know and understand the other side of the coin—love's antithesis, hate. He does not make a game of love. To him the emotion is meaningful, all-consuming, powerful. And to him lust and passion without love can only become hate, self-loathing.

And now the sonnet:

Th' expense of Spirit in a waste of shame  
 Is lust in action; and till action, lust  
 Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,  
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;  
 Enjoy'd no sooner but despisèd straight;  
 Past reason hunted; and, no sooner had,  
 Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait  
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad:  
 Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;  
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;  
 A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;  
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.  
 All this the world well knows; yet none knows well  
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

A Shakespearian sonnet is always fourteen lines of iambic pentameter, and two elements of the form never change—the meter and the line length. This condensation of means lends itself to an intensity and a unified focus of idea and mood.

---

\* It might be mentioned that the "Shakespearian" form of the sonnet was not invented by Shakespeare, but was already in use before he wrote. However, he enriched it to such an extent that it cannot but be said to belong to him.



Iambic pentameter is the technical name we use to describe the meter of the sonnet form, the meter of a line of poetry being the measurement of its rhythmical beats, the measurement of its pulsations. Sonnet meter is measurable in terms of groups of light and heavy stresses, the first stress light, the second one heavy. When two such syllables form a group, the group is called an iambic foot, the basis of English poetic rhythm. When a line of poetry has five of these groupings of syllables—iambic feet—the line is called “Iambic Pentameter.” Thus:

light, heavy/light, heavy/light, heavy/light,  
 —        /        —        /        —        /        —  
 heavy/light, heavy  
       /        —        /

Each unit of this measurement is a “foot.”

In the above sonnet we find that the qualities of power and intensity, force and energy, are the poet’s intent, and he brings all his art’s resources to bear to carry out his meanings. There is a power and intensity of the metered form, the power and intensity of the selected words—their meanings, their placement, their sounds, their imagery—and there is a power and intensity of the sonnet structure itself and its rhythmic movement.

First we shall consider the power and intensity of the rhythmic means. The poet’s very use of the sonnet meter—the first stress light, the second heavy—starts the movement in a forward motion. Nor is the meter used to give a sense of smoothness, a flowing, ongoing beat, but beats in hammer-like pulsations, like the pounding power of a Cézanne painting, to give a sense of insistency and drama relieved only by the lighter stresses. The repetition and patterning of this type of metered rhythm unifies, builds, and augments the drama. It is the light and dark of a painting, the loud and soft of a piece of music.

The poem, because it speaks urgently and powerfully, in a sense selects its own meter; the meter does not squeeze the poem into a “mold.” For all the contrast of the beat, however, it must be noted that this rhythmic form helps to contain and control the work, for, notwithstanding all its force,

it does not fly off in all directions. Care, too, has been taken to avoid too-regular a beat, for then the poem would pound too hard, would be monotonous and ungraceful.

But rhythmic forms cannot be used for their own sake, without regard for the words and their meanings that these rhythms contain, for then the rhythms would be meaningless, sound and fury that signifies nothing.

The words selected must continue to carry out the rhythmic form. Their very meanings in this work conjure up a strange, frightening, inexorable energy. Listen to them: "perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame." The words are powerful, dramatic, atmospheric, and we respond. Furthermore, the interrelationship of the words should not be overlooked. For instance, in the two opening lines there is a strong parallelism between the words "expense" and "waste," the words "Spirit" and "shame." The words and their meanings are then intensified by their double meanings: the double meaning of the word "waste" as "expense" and as "wilderness"—the waste place in which the Spirit is wasted; or the double meaning of the word "expense" as a "pouring out" and "the price paid."

The first two compulsive lines not only introduce us to the theme and mood of the piece, but, as long phrases, give weight and a rhythmic setting for the string of adjectives that follow. And what adjectives—what words they are and what they mean! Let us hear them again: "perjured, murderous, bloody; savage, extreme, rude, cruel." They thrust and stab into the air like thunderbolts, only to be checked and held in balance by the long phrases of the first two lines and the lines that follow them and, to a lesser extent, by the shorter phrases that draw them to a close.

We find this powerful play of the words, their meanings, their place in phrase and line throughout the sonnet. Let us read the last two lines of the sonnet—the couplet.

All this the world well knows; yet none knows well  
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

In the first line of this couplet we find a direct opposition of meaning between the word "world" and the word "none," a strong word-play between "well knows" and "knows well."



There is the force of denial in the phrase, "all this the world well knows"; as it thrusts and counterthrusts against the phrase, "yet none knows well." And in the second line of the couplet we find all the weight and meaning, all the tension of opposites that man gives to the words "heaven" and the "hell" of self-loathing.

There is a constant succession of varied images, and, because these images are concrete and because they are drawn from the world of familiar experience, they help give a sense of surging immediacy, power and dynamics. Imagery, too, demands from us an alert attention. A word may be considered in two ways: first, for its dictionary meaning, which has to do primarily with the mental image it provokes. This mental, literal, exact meaning is seldom wide enough for a poetic context. When, however, the poet uses words as figures of speech or imagery, he makes them not merely expressive of their actual meanings, but connotative of many other things, pleasant or unpleasant to us, depending on our own experiences. Imagery not only calls upon our own experiences, but helps to enlarge and expand them.

But the poet, to produce a work of art, must be sure that he does not use the "magic" of imagery just to produce pictures. To be significant its use must help color and enhance. In the present sonnet, it also gives power to the meaning and substance of the work. Shakespeare's use of imagery in this fully expressive poem is vivid, never vague in outline or feeling.

What we find, then, is a rhythm of word, thought, and imagery superimposed on the sonnet's metrical rhythm—an interpenetration and an interacting of each form as words and meanings and rhythms thrust and counterthrust against each other and are interlocked, not in struggle, but in a harmony and balance of purpose to serve the vehicle, this sonnet, in its becoming an aesthetic entity.

The sounds of the sonnet also help the forward thrust of the work. There is a succession of "s" sounds and a pattern of "sp" and "st" sounds, as in the words *expense*, *spirit*, and *waste* of the first line and the word *lust* in the second. Thus, not only are the words joined by meaning and rhythms, but by sound as well. The lines fairly spit.

Similarly, the “sh” of the word *shame* in line one reappears in the word *action* in line two; also in line two we are given a distorted mirror image of sound.

lust in action/till action, lust

Further along, we have the sound pattern of “rd” in the words “perjured” and “murderous” and the sound of “b” and “l” in “bloody, full of blame.” Such interlinked, yoking sound patterns, alliterations, continue throughout the poem. They help to carry us forward at the same time that they lend the work a heightened intensity.

We find, too, that no sound pattern dominates other sound patterns; in fact, no one pattern of any sort—of rhythm, rhyme, meter, word meaning, or sound—dominates over other patterns and forms. Thus there is the needed sense of order: the whole is an arrangement of elements logically organized in an emphatic sequence.

Shakespeare also uses the device of rhyme\* to give further meaning, significance, and drama to this sonnet. Rhyme emphasizes the words rhymed, and, with able poets, these words are usually key words, vital to the poem. But a rhyme which is a mere surface sound-repetition is wasted. With its sound-repetition it should also repeat the idea and extend it through the vibrational overtones and undertones of the sounds.

The Shakespearian rhyme pattern is:

a - b - a - b      c - d -c -d      e - f -e - f      g - g

The first and third lines rhyme, the second and fourth lines rhyme, and so on, while the last two lines make a rhyming couplet.

Shakespeare, here, has selected rhyming words that are at once alike in vowel sounds and unlike in consonant sounds; thus, they pull both apart and together with equal force, allowing profound thought as well as chordlike, harmonic, textured, forceful sounds and rhythms to merge,

---

\* In Shakespeare, rhyme is based on the vowel sound of words.



integrate, and vibrate, so that we are made aware of the significance of the work.

Where words constitute one of the means of expression, there is always the danger that they will be used merely to illustrate. If the illustrative meaning is allowed to become overpowering, the plastic form, the artistic aesthetic quality, of the work will suffer.

Shakespeare, because of his ability to discern things deeply and fully, to probe beneath the surface, because of his depth of perception and sensitivity, deals in content that is significant; and, because he has organized his matter—the word meanings, spoken tonal colors, rhythms, and qualities—in a meaningful marriage of relationships and because the relevant factors are joined and work together, he makes what is significant, what is expressed, part of our experiences too.

Then there is the decorative aspect of the piece. This we recognize as our ear delights in the immediate sensuousness of the tonal sound contrasts, in the color of the spoken voice, in the rhythmic repetitions, in the unity and variety of sound and rhythm, and in the satisfying engagement of eye and lips.

The Shakespearian sonnet formally consists of three quatrains of four lines each and a couplet. The first quatrain begins the thought; the thought is developed in the second and third quatrains and is then summed up, climaxed, in the couplet. Think of the individual four-line quatrain as a single movement in a Beethoven symphony, each quatrain or movement able to stand alone but joined to the others by the poetic relationships to become a greater whole. The three movements are then set against the couplet, thus allowing two different rhyme schemes to be incorporated as contrast in the work. We are drawn by a steadily mounting sense of force and power to the culmination of the couplet. The couplet, here, is the symphonic coda of this symphony of words.

The sonnet has the transferred values of an approaching, encroaching storm over the sea—the deepening clouds, the rising wind, the turbulent sea meeting in an ever-rising dramatic tide of titanic struggle of nature and man.

I have tried to show, here, how two poets each used the relevant factors of his poem—its rhythms, sounds, and meanings, its qualities, its matter—for his purposes and how the coördination of these relevant factors in a balanced, working relationship creates in each work its identity, its reason for being. For form is:

*What* in a work of art has been organized.

*How* it has been organized.

And for what *Purpose* it has been organized.

I have objectified, for myself and hopefully for you, the art and the form in two pieces of poetry. This actively objective approach is necessary to all learning of any art form, if art is to have any meaning for us. To come to art sentimentally, “worshipping at its altar,” is to defeat and destroy its purpose. To worship anything is to be in awe of it, to be mystified by it. If we do this with art, or with any of life’s experiences, we hold it at arm’s length; it never truly becomes a part of us, and we will not grow with the artist and his work. Art is an answering of our aesthetic needs, but it must also mean growth. There must be an active relationship between the art form and ourselves.

One of the great boons of the artistic experience is to find ourselves nourished, and so to grow with the artist. Hopefully we will not only see, but will finally learn to perceive and to understand. And, like the walls of Jericho, the walls of ignorance and stunted aesthetic growth will come tumbling down.



---

*Unless otherwise stated, the originals reproduced in the following plates belong to the collection of The Barnes Foundation.*

---







French Primitive

*Mary Going to the Temple*



PLATE 2



de Kooning

*February*  
(Collection: Dr. and Mrs. E. Berman, Baltimore  
—Courtesy Sidney Janis Gallery, New York)





Renoir

*Nude on Green Background*

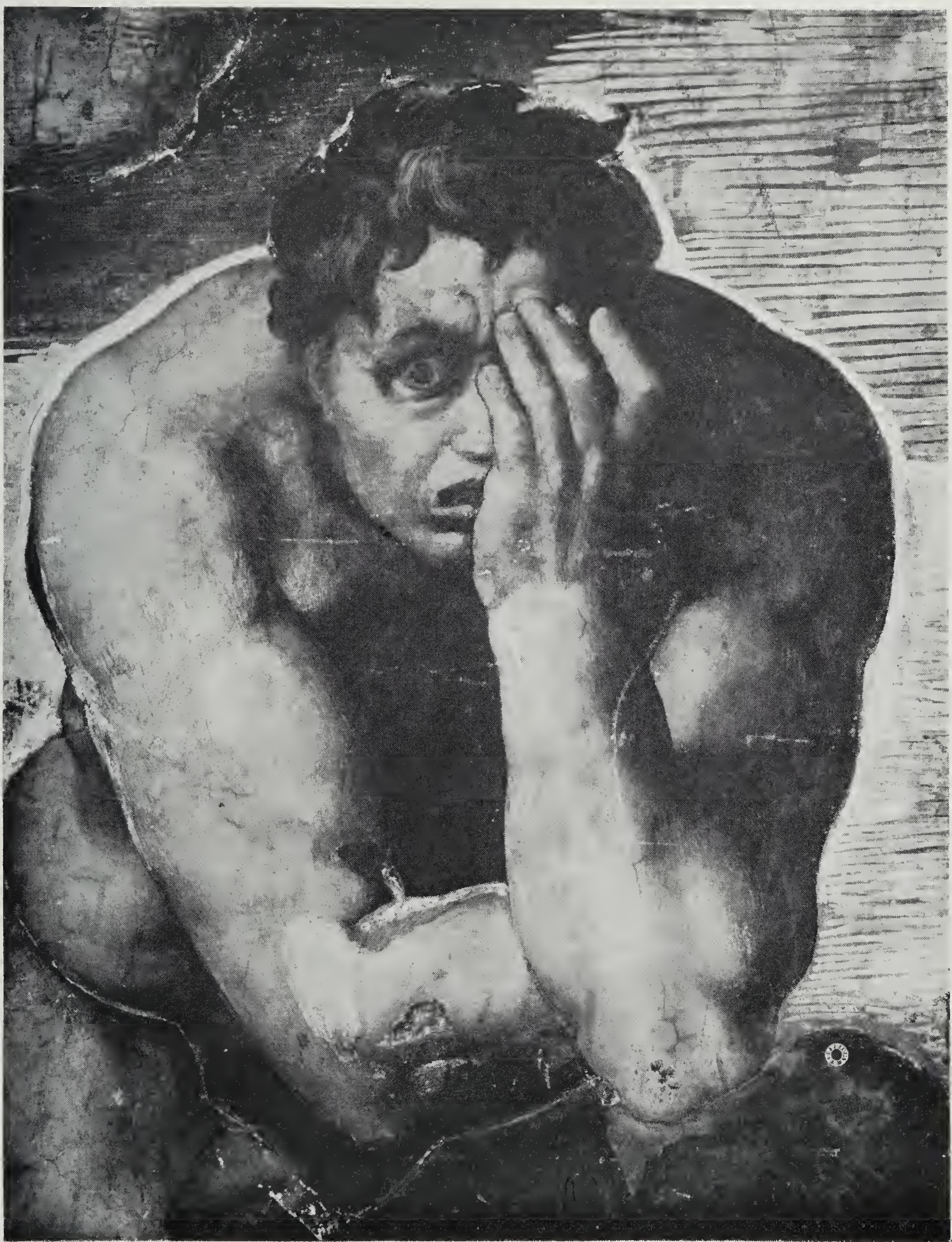




Ghirlandaio

*An Old Man and his Grandson*  
(Louvre—Photograph Musées Nationaux, Paris)

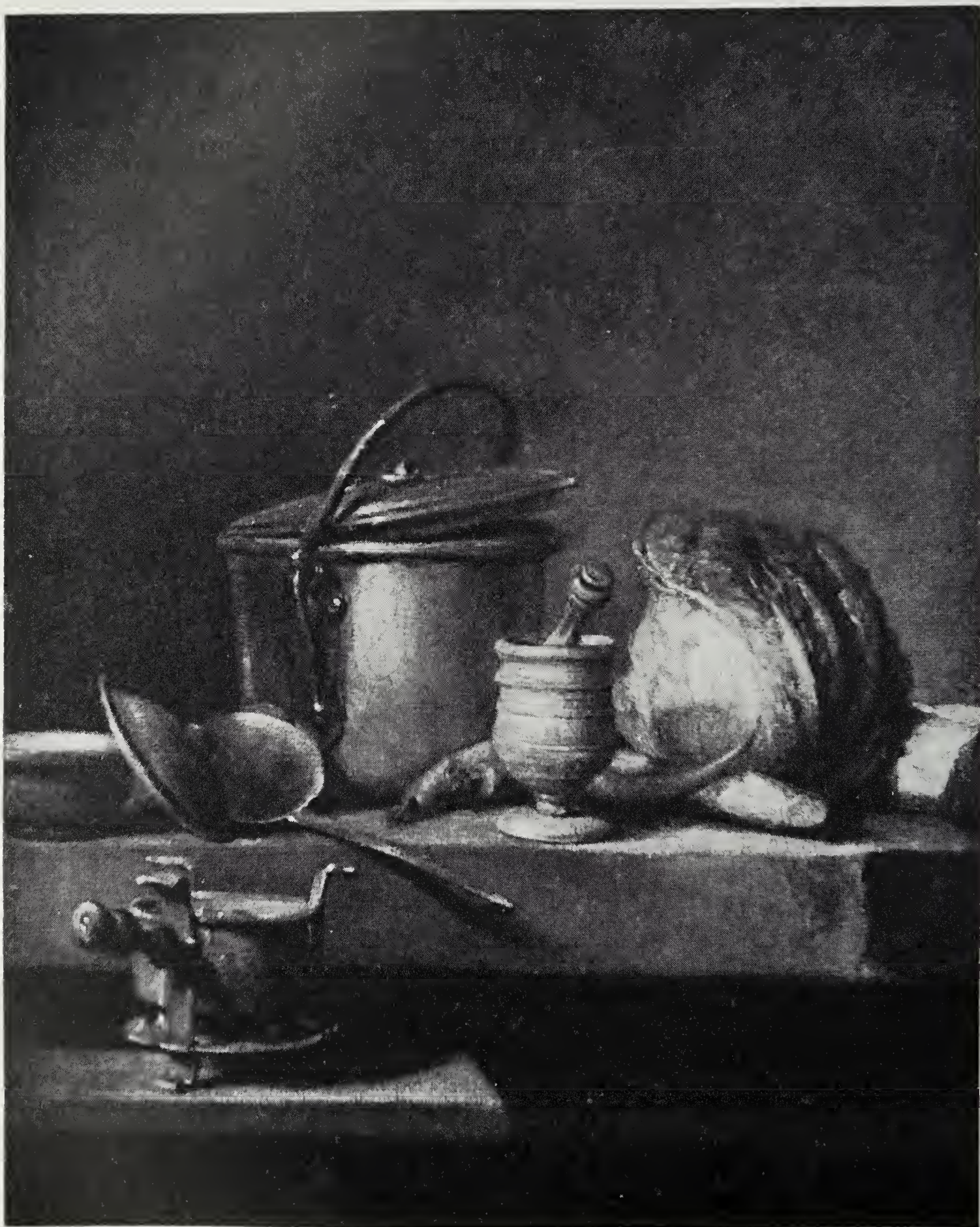




Michelangelo

Detail from *The Last Judgement*  
(Sistine Chapel, Vatican  
—Photograph Musei Vaticani)

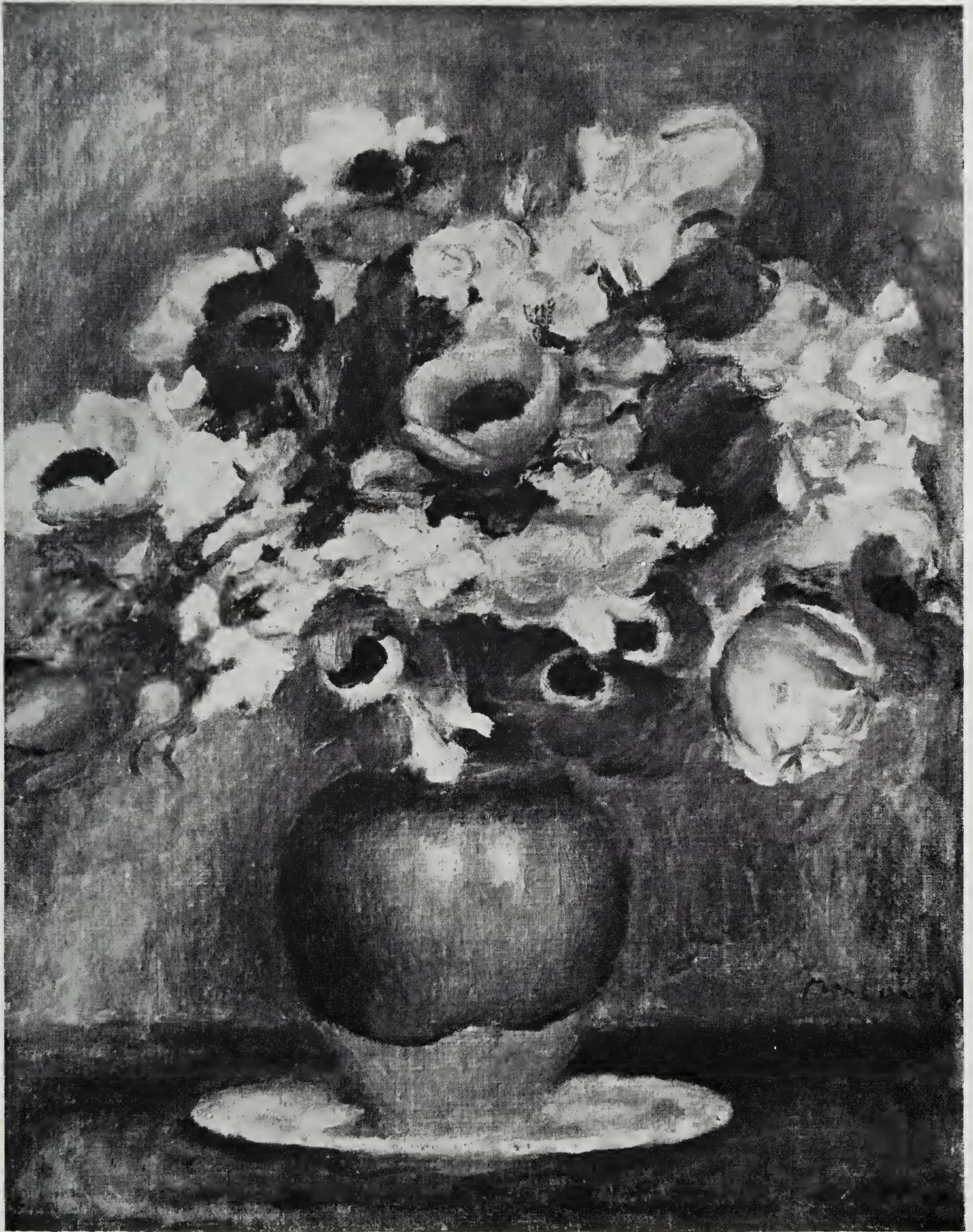




Chardin

*Still Life with Cabbage*

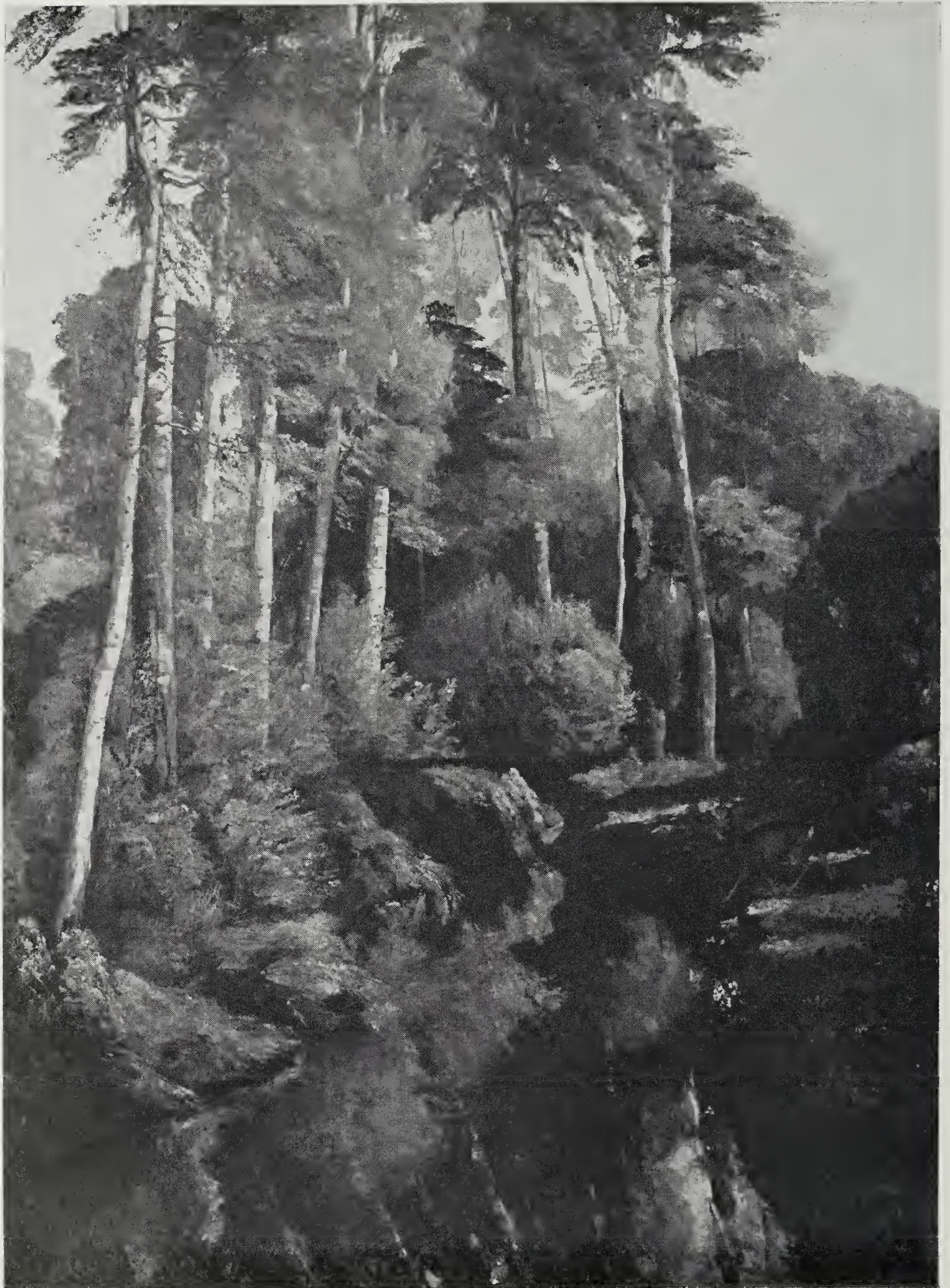




Renoir

*Anemones*





Courbet

*Forest Pool*  
(Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
Gift of Mrs. Samuel Parkman Oliver)





Cézanne

*The Viaduct*  
(Museum of Modern Art, Moscow)









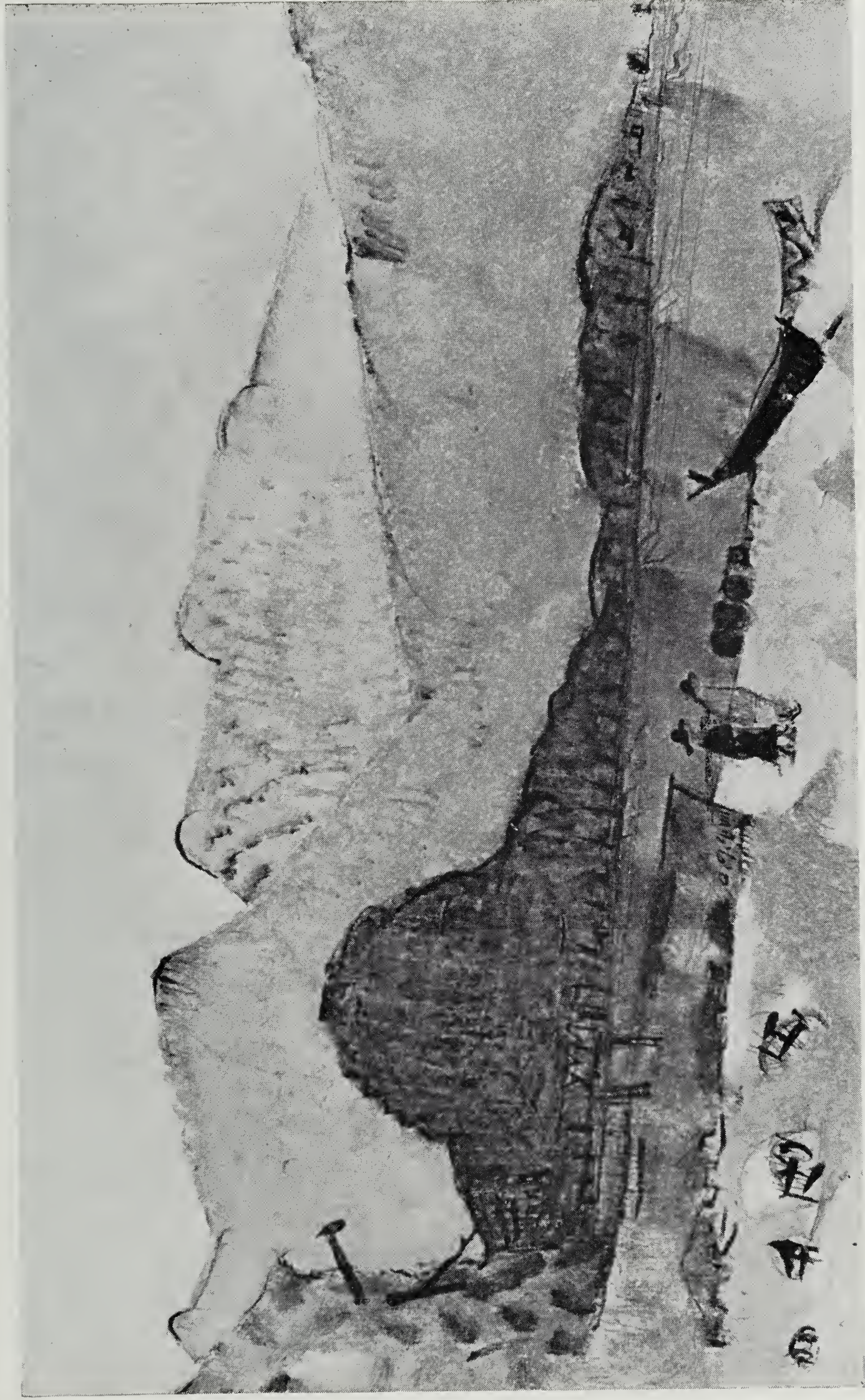
Renoir

*Pourville*

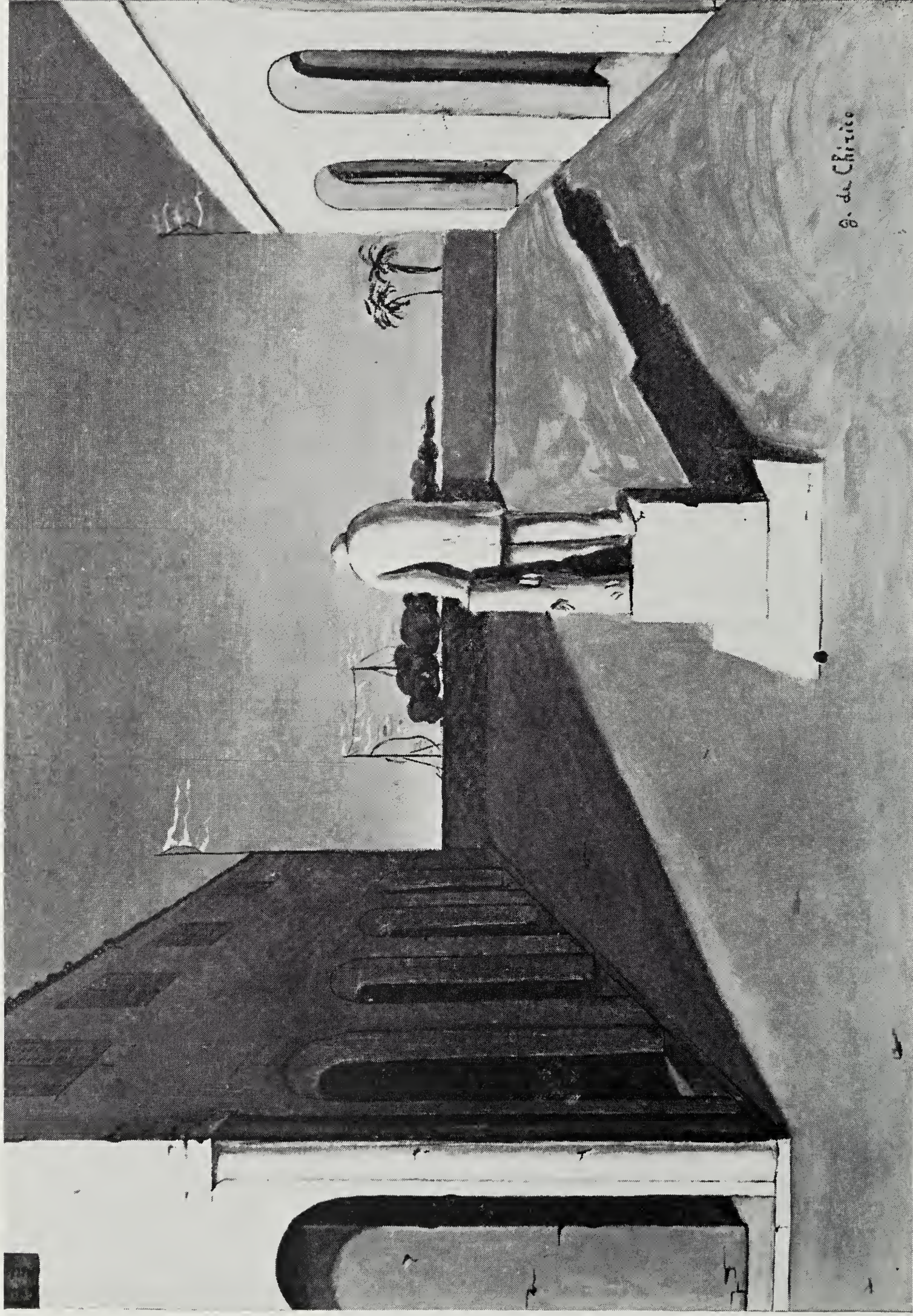














FOLD-OUT









Friends Meetinghouse at Birmingham, Pa.

Photograph of Site  
(The Philadelphia Inquirer)





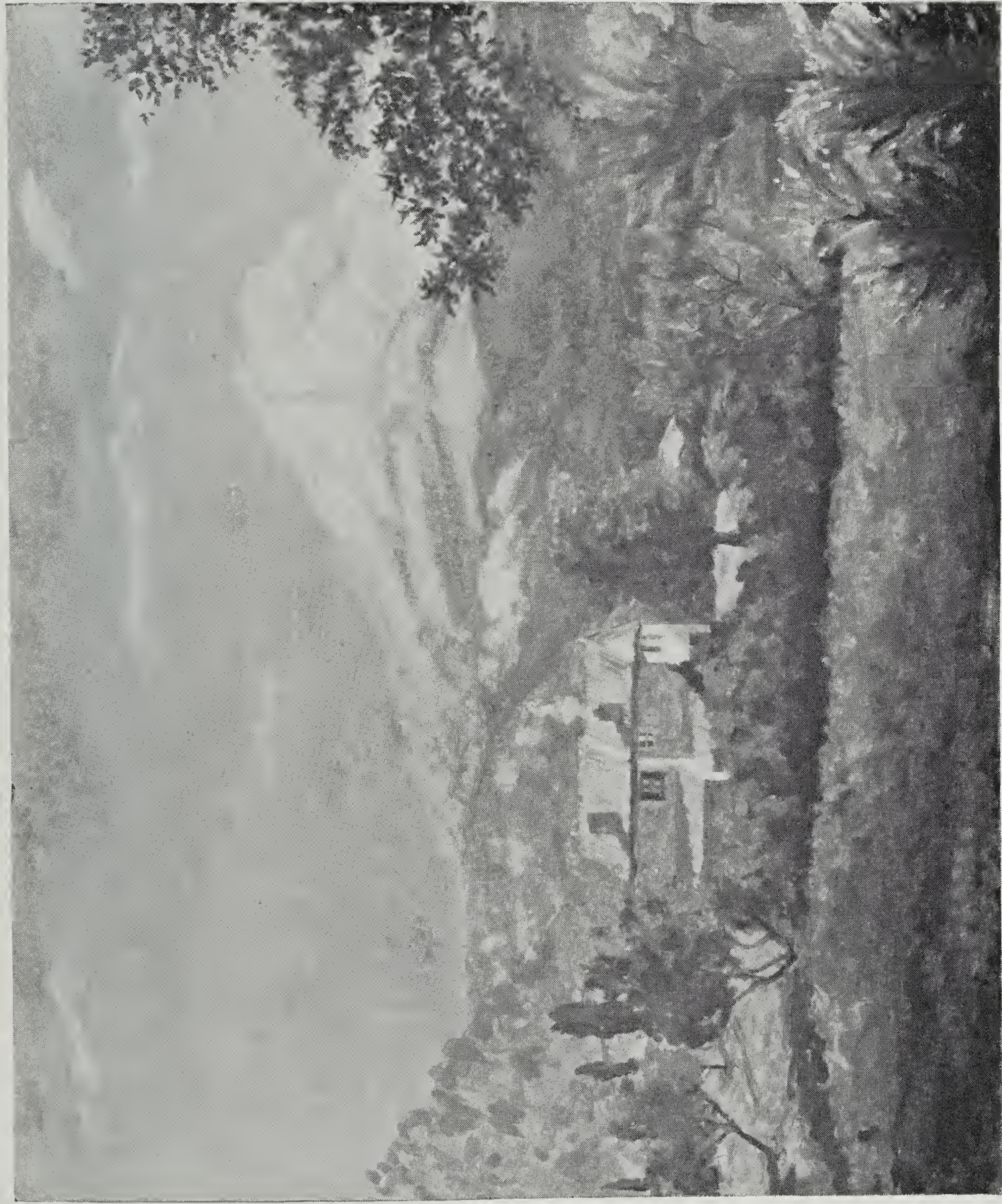
Horace Pippin

*Friends Meetinghouse at Birmingham, Pa.*  
(Private Collection)









Sir Winston Churchill

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Collection Lady Spencer Churchill  
—Photograph copyright George Rainbird, Ltd.)





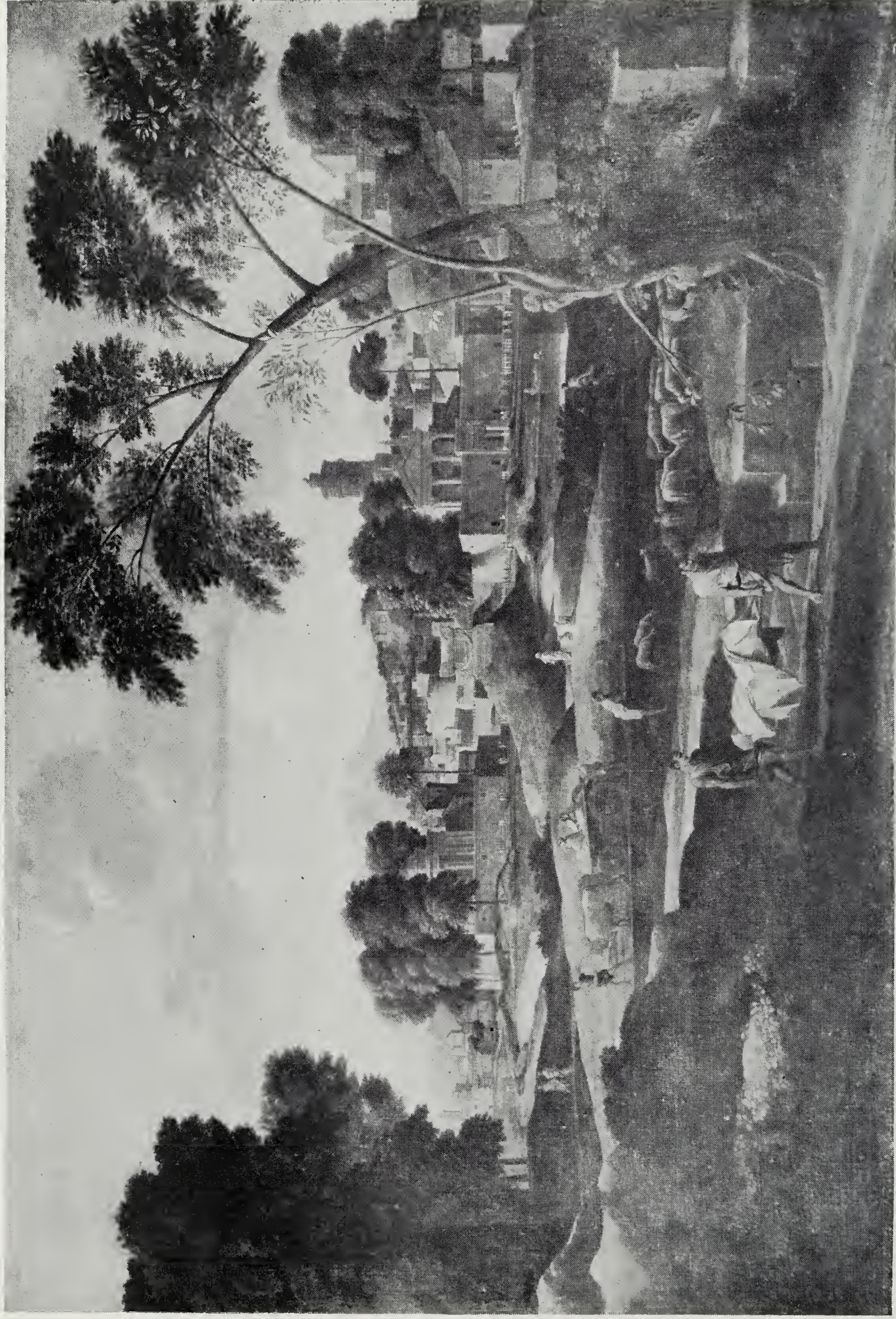




Tintoretto

*Christ and the Woman of Samaria*









Mantegna

*The Agony in the Garden*  
(Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees,  
The National Gallery, London)









Berckheyde

*Street Scene*













Jules Dupré

*Pastoral Scene*  
(Academy, Leningrad)





Ilya E. Repin

*The Cossacks*  
(State Museum, Leningrad)





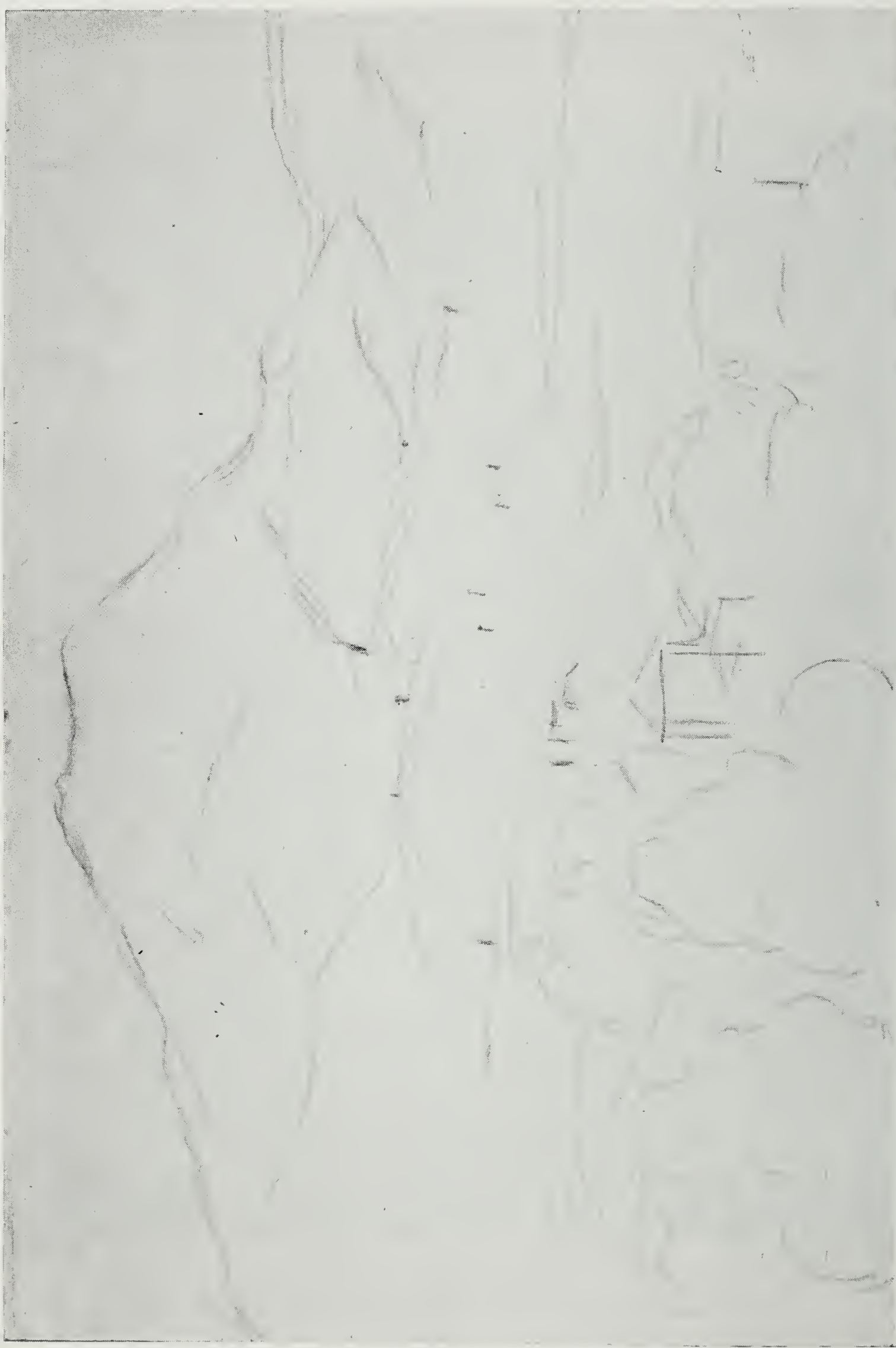




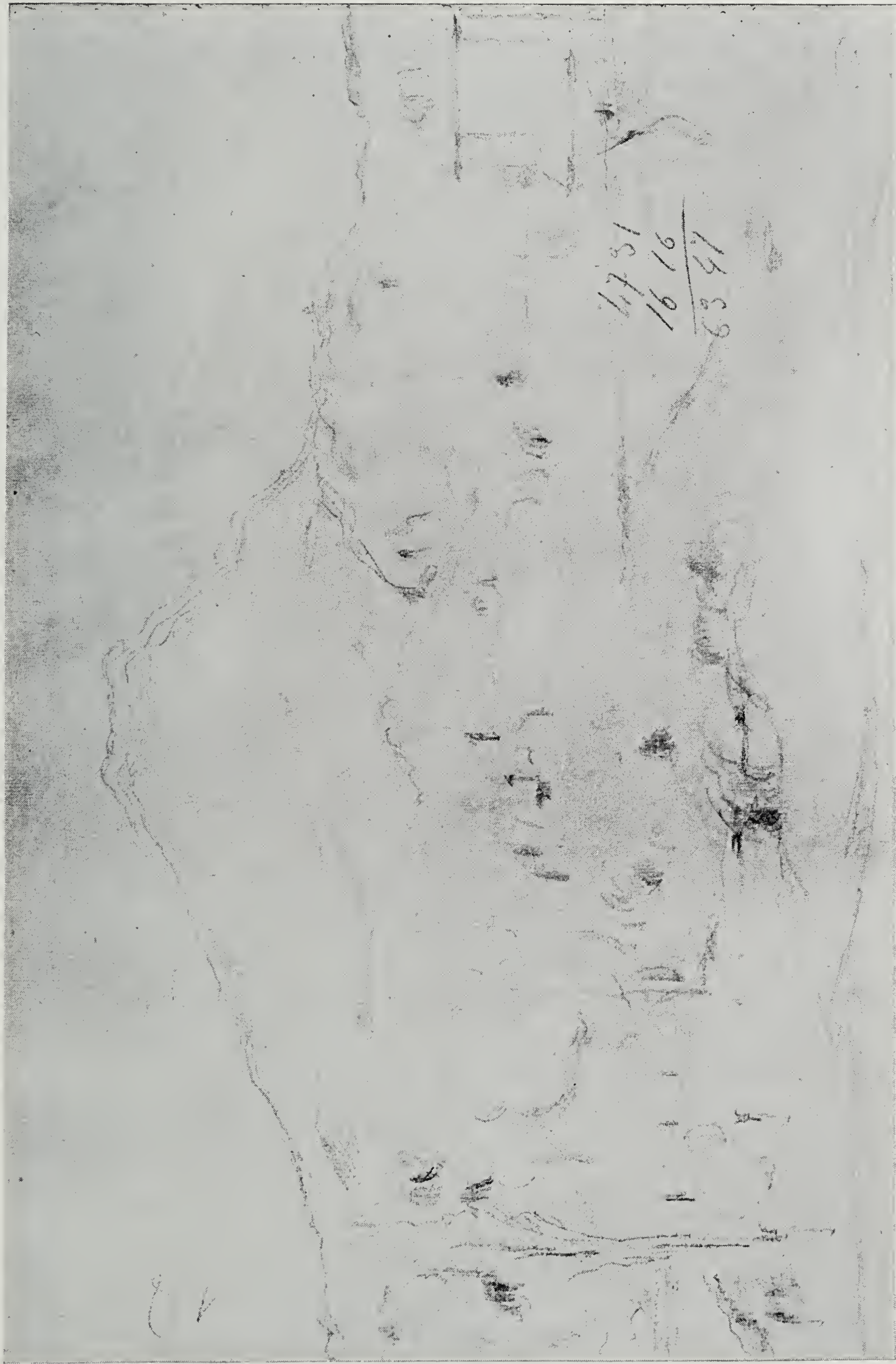
Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire from Bibémus Quarry*  
(The Baltimore Museum of Art  
Cone Collection)









Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire* (verso of Plate 34)  
 (Drawing)  
 (Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr.)  
 —Photograph by David Gulick





Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Watercolor)  
(Courtauld Institute Galleries, London)





Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Watercolor)  
(Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr.)  
—Photograph by David Gulick)





Mont Ste-Victoire, Aix-en-Provence, France

Photograph of Site  
(Archi and Lucy Riley)





Cézanne

*Peak of Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Watercolor)





Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves*  
(Pencil and watercolor)  
(The Tate Gallery, London)





Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Watercolor)  
(Private Collection, New York)

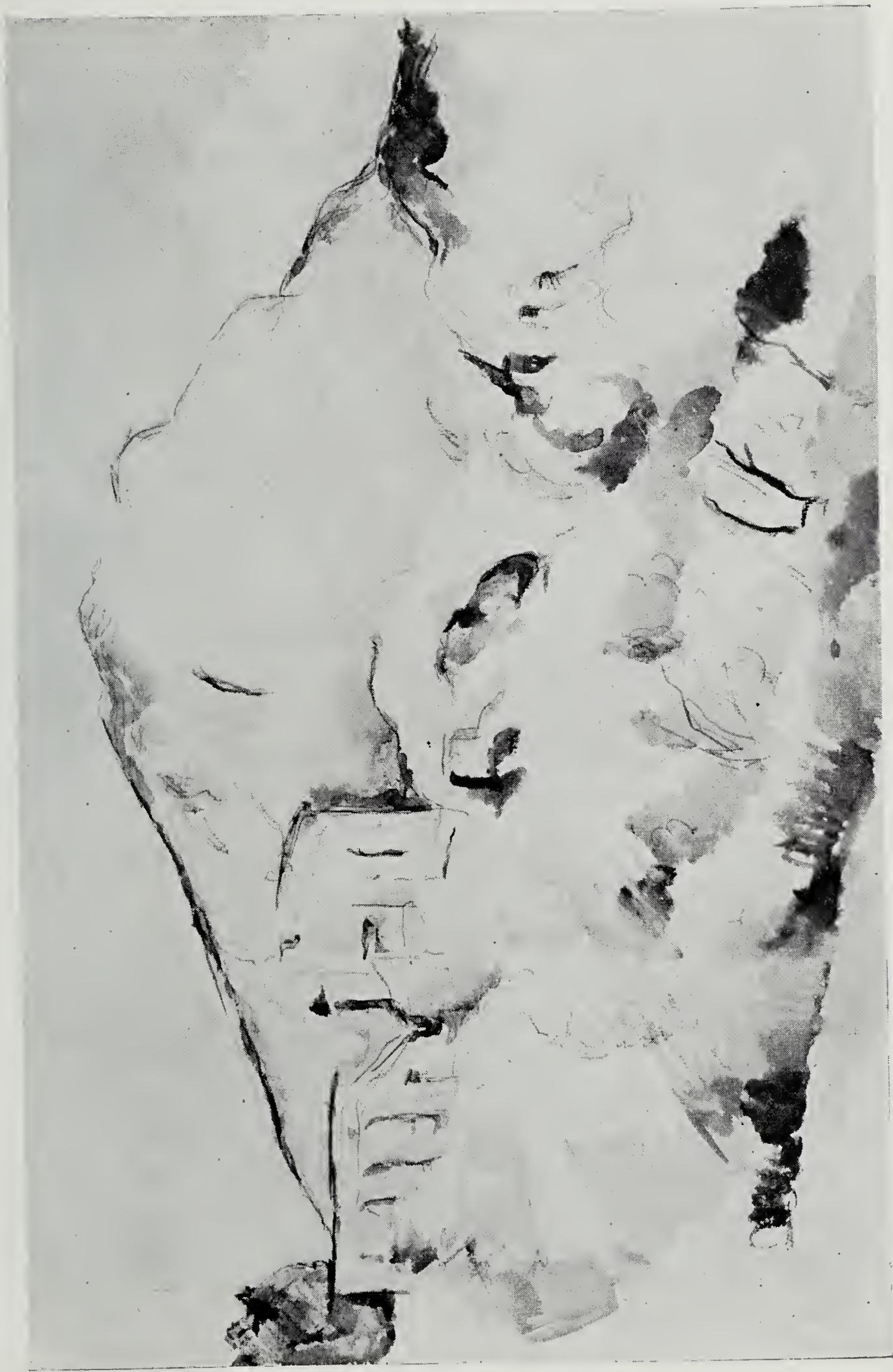




Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Watercolor and pencil)  
(Musée Granet, Aix en-Provence, France  
—Photograph Henry Ely—Aix)





Cézanne

*"Château Noir" and Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Watercolor)  
(Albertina, Vienna—Photograph Augerer and Göschl)

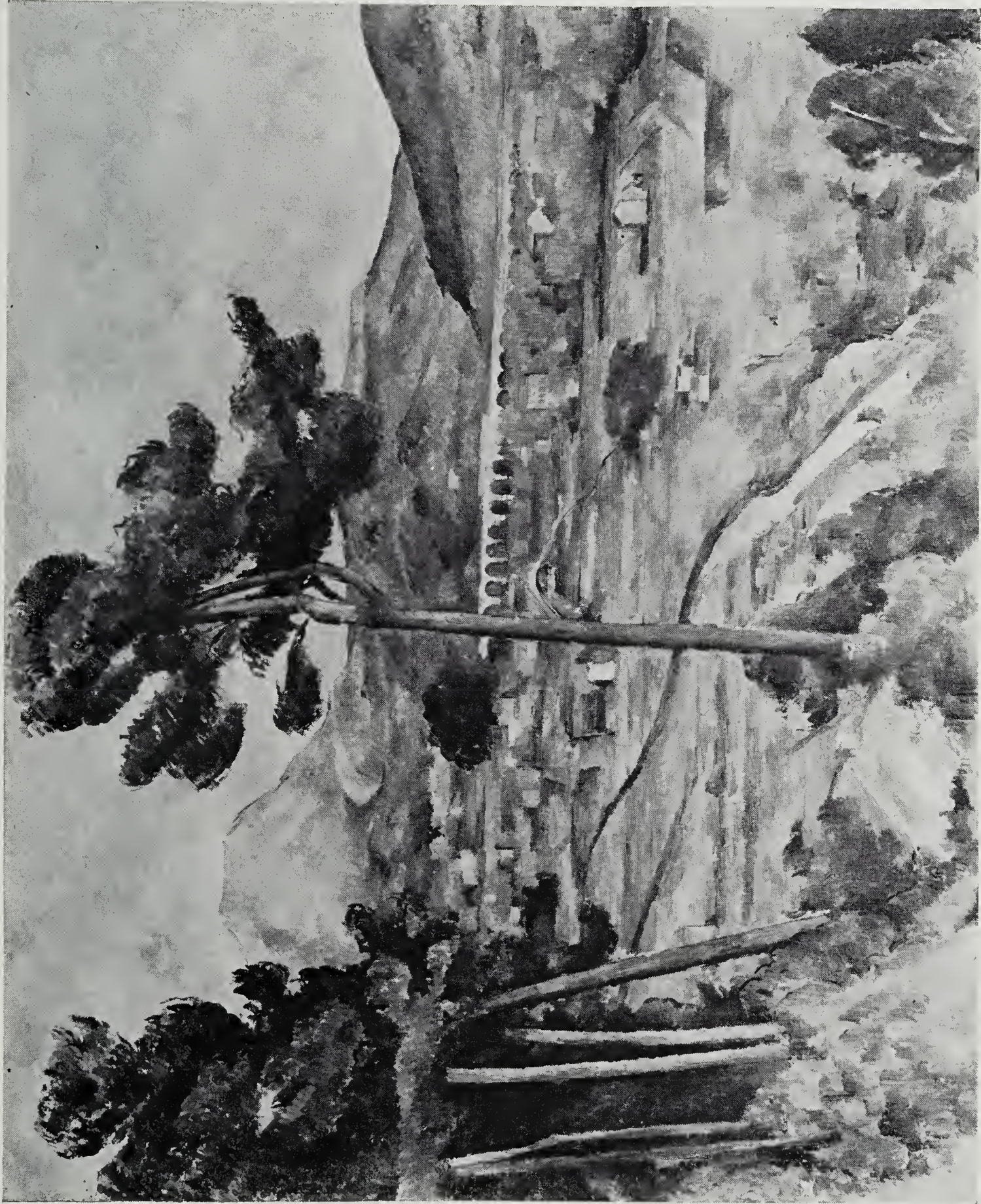




Cézanne

*The Plaster Oven*  
(Watercolor)  
(Louvre—Photograph Musées Nationaux, Paris)





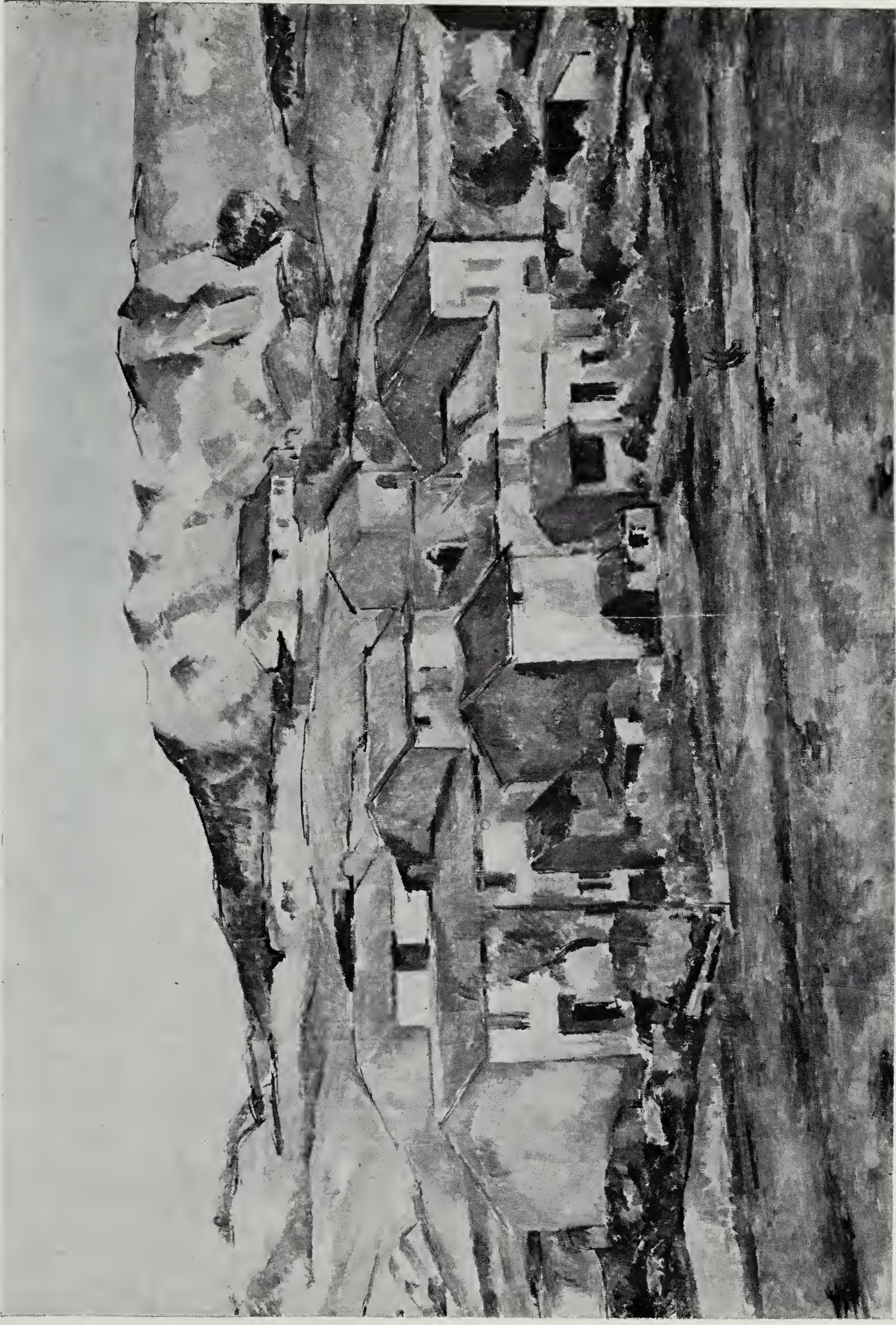
Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havermeyer, 1929  
The H. O. Havermeyer Collection)









Cézanne

*Gardanne and Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(White House Collection—Presented to the  
U.S. Government in memory of Charles A. Loeser)





Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Philadelphia Museum of Art  
Purchased: The George W. Elkins Collection  
Photograph by A. J. Wyatt, Staff Photographer)

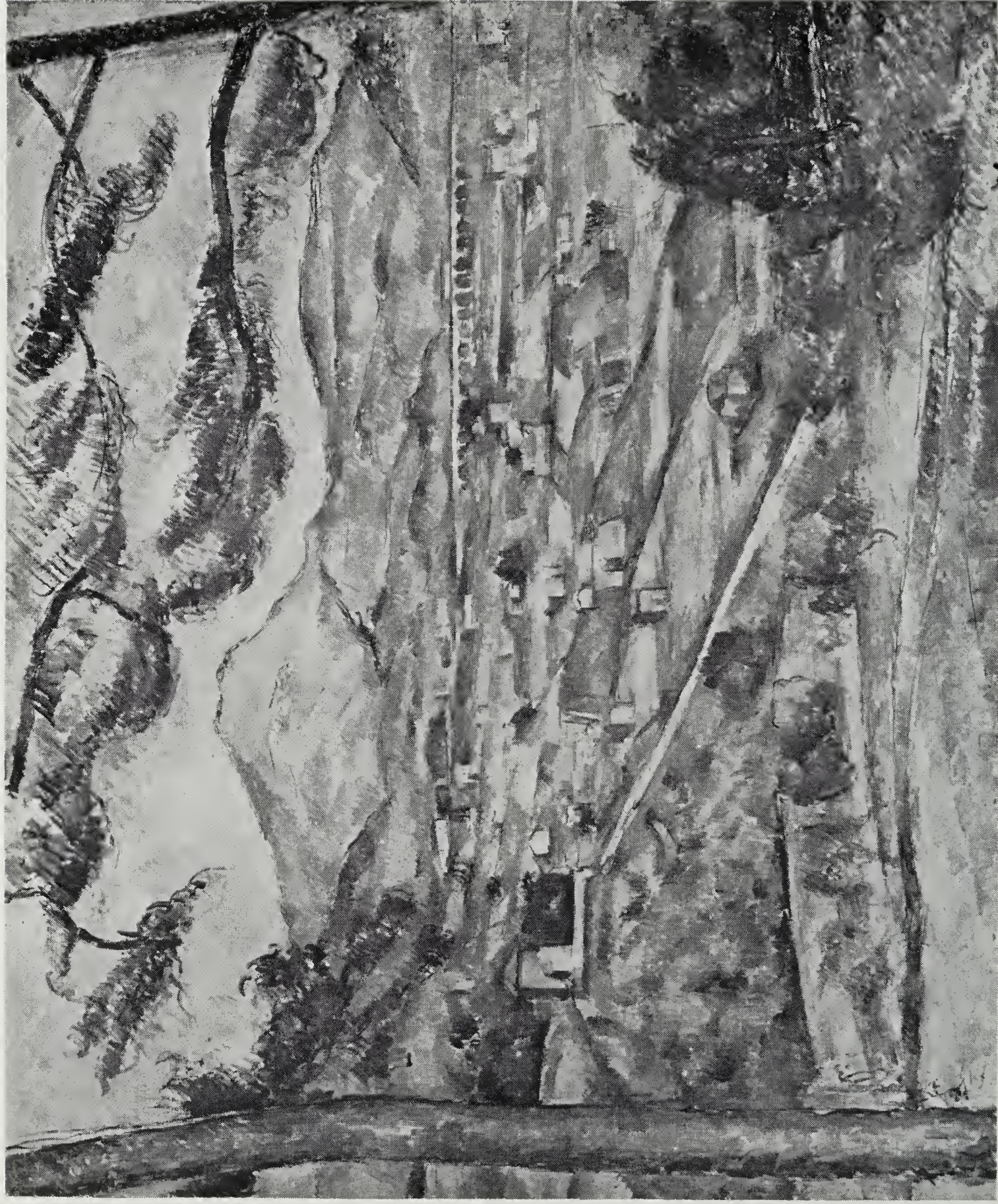




Cézanne

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Private Collection)

















Marsden Hartley

*Landscape (and Mont Ste-Victoire)*  
(Babcock Galleries, New York, N.Y.)





Marsden Hartley

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Des Moines Art Center  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Bohen)

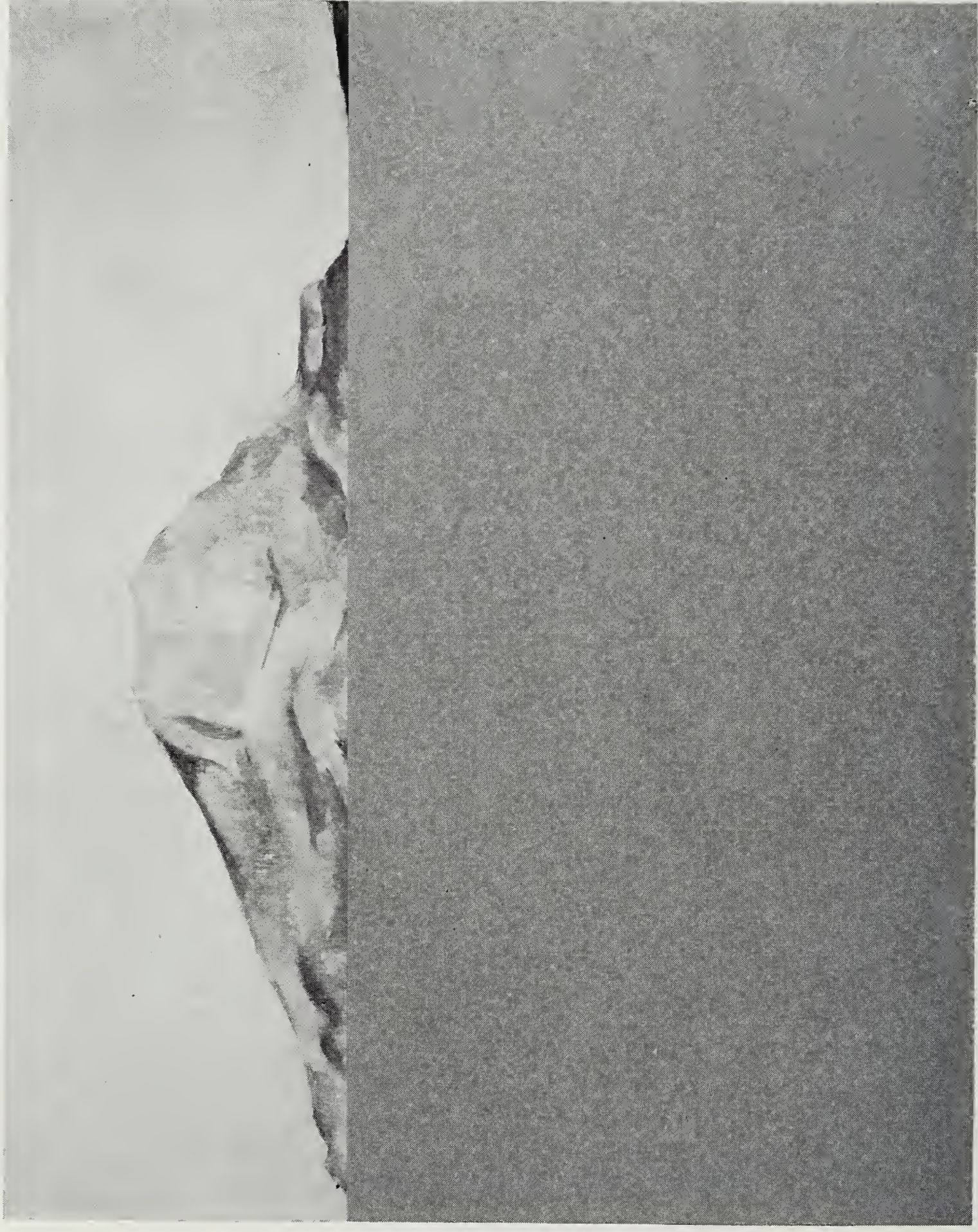




Marsden Hartley

*Mont Ste-Victoire*  
(Collection, Mr. Harry W. Anderson, California)





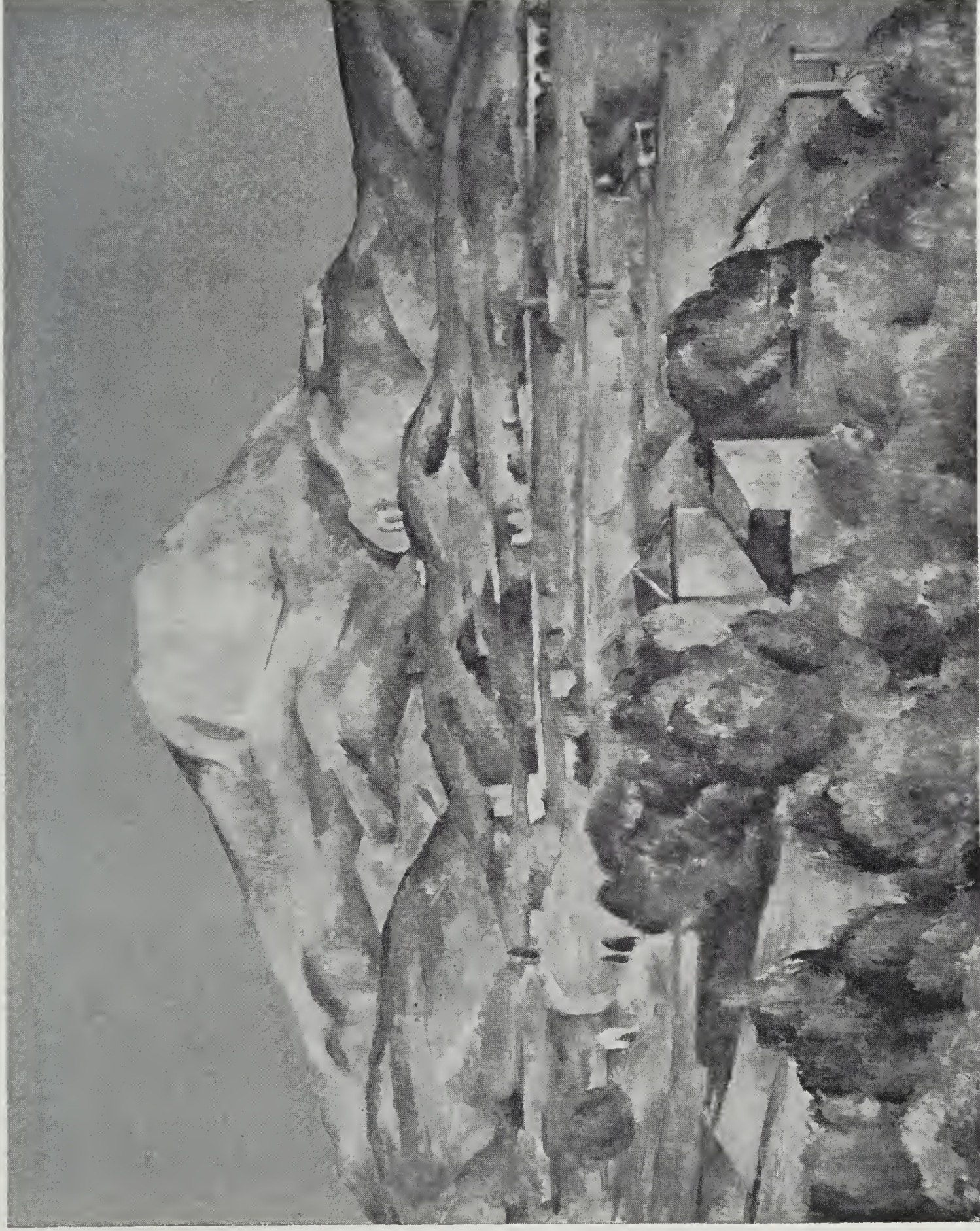












Cézanne

*Valley of the Arc (Mont Ste-Victoire Seen from Bellevue)*  
(Altered photograph of Plate 59)







FOLD-OUT









Mont Ste-Victoire, Aix-en-Provence, France

Photograph of Site  
(Archi and Lucy Riley)





Cézanne

*Valley of the Arc (Mont Ste-Victoire Seen from Bellevue)*











# Curriculum of the Art Department

## FIRST YEAR—BASIC COURSE

Fundamentals of art and education. The problem of appreciation. The objective method. The roots of art. The art in art. Learning to see.

## SECOND YEAR

Application of basic principles of art and education to a systematic study of the aesthetic development of the important traditions in painting and of the work of individual artists.

## SEMINAR AND RESEARCH SESSIONS

Individual study-projects in the arts and sciences based on the Foundation's educational method.



**PUBLICATIONS AUTHORED BY MEMBERS OF  
THE ART DEPARTMENT STAFF**

THE ART IN PAINTING  
Albert C. Barnes

THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE  
Laurence Buermeyer

AN APPROACH TO ART (*Out of Print*)  
Mary Mullen

ART AND EDUCATION  
Dewey, Barnes, Buermeyer, Mullen & de Mazia

ART AS EXPERIENCE  
John Dewey

PRIMITIVE NEGRO SCULPTURE (*Out of Print*)  
Paul Guillaume & Thomas Munro

THE FRENCH PRIMITIVES AND THEIR FORMS  
Albert C. Barnes & Violette de Mazia

THE ART OF RENOIR  
Albert C. Barnes & Violette de Mazia

THE ART OF HENRI-MATISSE  
Albert C. Barnes & Violette de Mazia

THE ART OF CÉZANNE  
Albert C. Barnes & Violette de Mazia

**ALSO AVAILABLE**

JOURNAL OF THE ART DEPARTMENT



















